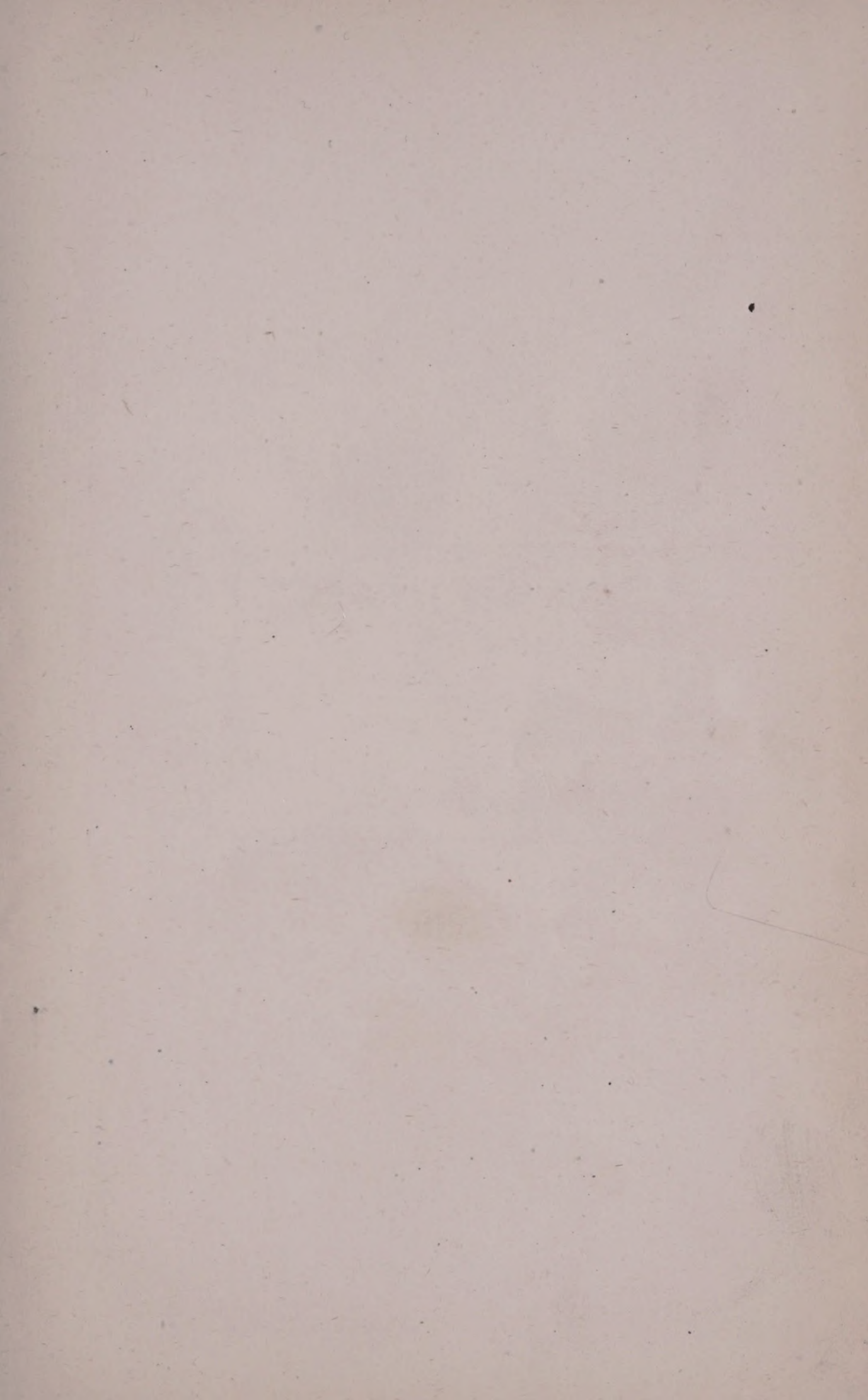


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THE
HEROES OF FAITH:

A Series of Discourses

ON

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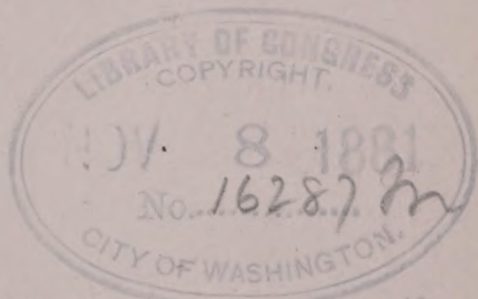
IN THE

ELEVENTH CHAPTER OF HEBREWS.

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BY

REV. D. T. PHILLIPS,

PORT CHESTER, N. Y.



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TO

Hon. C. L. James.

With pleasure I dedicate to you this literary effort. Hailing from the parish of your ancestors, I am somewhat familiar with your pedigree, and am intimately acquainted with your kinsfolk, still residing near that antiquated spot. Though virtue is not hereditary, yet I believe that the sterling, religious character of your worthy progenitors has contributed to shape your life and conduct. I have watched your public career with special interest, and rejoice to know, that every advancement has been the result of honest and faithful service. Your painstaking task in exposing political corruption, and maintaining political economy, receives the nation's approval. You have the sympathies and prayers of the best men in our Republic.

Respectfully yours,

D. T. PHILLIPS,

Port Chester, N. Y.

October 24, 1881.

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SUGGESTIVE EXTRACTS.

INVISIBILIA NON DECIPIUNT.

Faith without works is like a bird without wings.—BEAUMONT.

The two hymns of the Apostolic epistles are the hymn of faith (Hebrews xi.) and the hymn of love (1 Corinthians xiii.), both making flights of impassioned rhetoric.—ALFORD.

Instead of faith being a difficult thing, a man has to throw the dead wood of logic and of scepticism right across the current of his life, to prevent him from exercising it.—BEECHER.

The Scripture hath laid a flat opposition between faith and sense. We live by faith, saith the Apostle, and not by sight, or by sense. They are two buckets; the life of faith and the life of sense. When one goes up, the other goes down; the higher faith rises, the lower sense and reason; the higher sense and reason, the lower faith.—BRIDGE.

So faith without works is worthless, for it has in it no saving quality. Such faith is a mere intellectual assent to the truth, or rather, to some parts of the truth, leaving the heart unmoved, and, therefore, creating no motives to action.—J. M. PENDLETON.

There will be works with faith, as there is thunder with lightning; but just as it is not the thunder, but the lightning that strikes the tree, so it is not the works which justify. Put it in one sentence—faith alone justifies, but not the faith which is alone. Lightning alone strikes, but not the lightning which is alone, without thunder; for that is only summer lightning, and harmless.—F. W. ROBERTSON.

O faith is a busy, lively, active thing! It is impossible for it not to be ceaselessly working good. Whoso doeth not such works, is an unbelieving man. It is as impossible to separate works from faith, as to separate burning and shining from fire.—LUTHER.

Whatever faith touches it turns to gold, that is, into our good. It is a sword to defend, a guide to direct, a staff to support, a friend to comfort, and a golden key to open Heaven to us. Without it, it is impossible to please God. There is something very stimulating in the thought that

we can do that which shall actually please God ; it throws a light of glory on all duty.—BROOKS.

Faith is like the magnetic needle, often trembling, yet ever true ; swayed amid the tempest's wildest tossings, by the invisible, mysterious spell, which never fails to direct it right. It is computed that there are about fifty thousand voyages [in his day] always upon the ocean. Who can describe the obligation these are under to this constant, unerring guide?—BOWES.

Faith believes what it sees not ; for if thou seest, there is no faith : the Lord has gone away, so as not to be seen. He is hidden that He may be believed ; the yearning desire by faith after Him who is unseen, is the preparation of a Heavenly mansion for us ; when He shall be seen, it shall be given to us as the reward of faith.—AUGUSTINE.

Faith is the nail which fastens the soul to Christ, and love is that grace which drives it to the head. Faith takes hold of him, and love helps to keep the grip. Christ dwells in the heart by faith, and he burns in the heart by love ; like a fire melting the heart. Faith casts the knot, and love draws it fast.—ERSKINE.

But what is faith good for ? It is good for every good purpose ; the foundation and root of all graces. All the prayers made by devotion ; all the good works done by charity ; all the actual expressions of holiness ; all the praises sounded forth by thankfulness, come from the root of faith, that is the life of them all. Faith doth animate works, as the body lives by the soul.—SPENCER.

James, in making faith with works, and not faith without works, the condition of justification, is only in seeming contradiction with Paul. Neither made faith *in* one's own works the condition of justification, and thus one's own works the meritorious cause of justification. Both made faith in Christ the condition, and both insisted that it should be a genuine, and hence a working faith.—PEPPER.

A lion in conflict with the powers of hell, faith lies down like a lamb at the feet of her Lord. It returns and rests in quietness and in confidence. The calm resting upon God makes it victorious over all beside. In truth, it is He who fights for the believer, with the believer, in the believer. Faith does nothing alone, nothing of itself, but everything under God, by God, through God.—STOUGHTON.

Faith is something more than the assent of the understanding to testimony. It is something more than the gush of sentiment, or the outflow of emotion. It is something more than an isolated act of the will. It

is that which is comprehensive of them all. The faith which receives Christ, is a principle which draws upon all the constituents of our being.—PALMER.

While reason is puzzling herself about the mystery, Faith is turning it into her daily bread, and feeding on it. While Reason is applying the tests of her earthly chemistry, threatening to dissolve the very cross of Calvary in her crucibles, Faith has quietly set the holy doctrine to the music of her joy, and is singing it as her hymn of Benedictus or Magnificat in unquestioning peace.—F. D. HUNTINGTON.

Reason stands in the valley gazing upward to distant heights, as the traveller looks up to Mount Washington from Jefferson, or to Jungfrau from Interlachen, while faith climbs each summit to bring back transporting views, and flower, or fern, or gem. Reason represents the feet, and faith the wings.—DENNEN.

Sight is the noblest sense; it is quick; we can look from earth to Heaven in one moment: it is large; we can see the hemisphere of the heavens at one view: it is sure and certain; in hearing we may be deceived; and lastly, it is the most affecting sense. Even so, faith is the quickest, the largest, the most certain, the most affecting grace: like an eagle in the clouds, at one view it sees Christ in Heaven, and looks down upon the world; it looks backward and forward: it sees things past, present and to come.—SIBBES.

The Apostle speaks of being justified by faith, that is, not by our own righteousness, but by the righteousness of another; of living by faith, that is, not by our own earnings, so to speak, but by the generosity of another; of standing by faith, that is, not upon our own legs, as we should say, but upon those of another; of walking by faith, which is as much as if He had said, "We walk, not trusting in our eyes, but the eyes of another; we are blind, and cannot guide ourselves; we must therefore rely upon God for direction and instruction."—AND. FULLER.

Faith always goes before, Hope follows after, and may in some sort be said to be the daughter of Faith, for it is as impossible for a man to hope for that which he believes not, as for a painter to draw a picture in the air. Faith is the Christian's logic; Hope his rhetoric. Faith perceives that which is to be done; Hope gives alacrity to the doing it. Faith guides, advises, rectifies; Hope courageously encounters with all adversaries; therefore faith is compared to a doctor in the schools; Hope to a captain in the wars. Faith has for its objects, things past, present, and future; Hope only respects and expects things to come.—THOMAS ADAMS.

Faith is a certain image of eternity ; all things are present to it ; things past, and things to come are all so before the eyes of faith, that he in whose eyes that candle is enkindled beholds Heaven as present, and sees how blessed a thing it is to die in God's favor, and to be chimed to our grave with the music of a good conscience. Faith converses with the angels, and antedates the hymns of glory. Every man that hath this grace is as certain that there are glories for him if he persevere in his duty, as if he had heard and sung the thanksgiving song for the blessed sentence of doomsday.—JEREMY TAYLOR.

From that union (faith and works) have sprung up a glorious progeny. All the mighty deeds which have ennobled and elevated humanity own that parentage. Faith and action have been the source under God, of everything good, and great, and enduring in the Church of Christ: the very Church itself exists through them. Its model men were men of faith and action. A faith sound as that of the Assembly will not save the dying world around us unless it flows out into action.—CUYLER.

What is now most wanted in the Christian world is more faith. We too little respect faith ; we too much dabble in reason ; fabricating Gospels, where we ought to be receiving Christ ; limiting all faith, if we chance to allow of faith, by the measures of previous evidence ; and cutting the wings of faith, when laying hold of God, and bathing in the secret mind of God, it conquers more and higher evidence.—BUSHNELL.

Some people suppose that if you have faith you may act like a fool. But faith makes a person wise. It is one of the notable points about faith that it is sanctified common sense. That is not at all a bad definition of faith. It is not fanaticism ; it is not absurdity ; it is making God the grandest asset in our account, and then reckoning according to the soundest logic. It is not putting my hands into boiling water with the impression that it will not scald me ; it is not doing rash and absurd things. Faith is believing in God and acting toward God as we ought to do. It is treating Him, not as a cipher, but as a grand overtopping numeral in all our additions and subtractions. It is sanctified reason, enlightened from on high.—SPURGEON.

Nothing but Christian faith gives to the furthest future, the solidity and definiteness which it must have if it is to be a break-water for us against the fluctuating sea of present cares and thoughts.—MACLAREN.

Without faith it is impossible to please Him.—PAUL.

This is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith.—JOHN.

Ye believe in God, believe also in me.—CHRIST.

THE HEROES OF FAITH.

CHAPTER I.

HEB. XI. 1-3.

1 Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.

2 For by it the elders obtained a good report.

3 Through faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that things which are seen were not made of things which do appear.

“Faith lights us through the dark to Deity;

Whilst without sight, we witness that she shows

More God than in His works our eyes can see;

Though none but by those works the Godhead knows.”

—*Davenant.*

FAITH! What a comprehensive principle! It grasps, so to speak, two eternities—the eternity of the past and the eternity of the future. It lays hold of Him who is from everlasting to everlasting. In the words of our text, and the examples introduced in this chapter, the inspired writer teaches how faith has ever been the means of the saints’ perseverance in grace. Various interpretations have been given to these passages by hermeneutical scholars, but they all amount substantially to the same idea. The faith here so graphically described refers exclusively to believers. It is that comprehensive principle by

which they live, and which, in the hour of distress or trial, assuages grief and invigorates virtue.

We must, however, distinguish between faith and fanaticism. Faith must have substantial rations to feed upon. It must have living bread, and enduring meat. Fanaticism receives any dogma as truth, as a babe takes his sop from his mother's spoon. There is an antipodal difference between an intelligent faith, and blind infatuation.

THE COMPREHENSIVENESS OF FAITH.

I. *What constitutes faith.*

Two elements are mentioned here as entering into its composition.

1. *It is the substance of things hoped for.*

The word translated "substance" is one of the archaisms of the New Testament. Modern interpreters give the words "ground," "confidence," "assurance," as the nearest approximation to the meaning of the original. Faith is the ground, confidence, or assurance of things hoped for. None can feel the force of these words but such as live by faith. To them faith gives reality to things hoped for. Faith to them is not an empty shadow that flits across the firmament of their mind. It is the reality of a sun, whose golden light may be seen, and whose glowing rays may be felt. It is not a bubble on the stream, which vanishes in a moment. It is as the ocean in its service, conveying unnumbered thou-

sands on its mighty bosom to the port of eternal safety.

The "things hoped for" include all that can be enjoyed consistently with the Divine will on earth, and all we expect to enjoy in Heaven.

The believer's faith confidently expects daily forgiveness for sins committed, and opportunities for improvement neglected; spiritual strength to subdue tendencies and habits of evil; continued grace to fulfil the will of God; Divine presence in public and private worship; Divine aid in temptation; Divine support in the season of affliction, and in the hour of death; and at last, a blessed realization of all that God has promised in the life to come; namely, a glorious resurrection, a union with the redeemed triumphant church, the conscious attainment of perfect holiness, and the everlasting possession of perfect happiness. The believer hopes for all this, and faith assures him of their realization; yea, faith makes them realities to him now. He has the antepast in his soul of the choice feast of love he is to enjoy hereafter. He experiences so much of Heaven in his soul here that he is frequently led to exclaim:

" My willing soul would stay
In such a frame as this;
And sit and sing itself away
To everlasting bliss."

2. *It is the evidence of things not seen.*

The word "evidence" is a logical term, signifying "conclusive demonstration." It is here applied to objects invisible to the naked eye, or matters that

cannot be subjected to human sense. The mind of faith is so convinced of the reality of things unseen, that it has equal weight with the believer as though they were under his actual observation.

“Faith is the evidence or conviction of things not seen.”

Of these unseen realities there are three classes.

1. *Spiritual realities.*

Such as the being of God, with His attributes and perfections. His justice, truth, holiness and mercy. His eternity, immutability, omnipotence, omniscience and omnipresence. Faith conceives of God as a revelation; not as an hypothesis demonstrated by reasoning, but as a truth established by testimony. Faith supplies the room of reason. Not that these things are unreasonable, but are, as Finney said of the Trinity, “above reason.”

2. *Historical realities.*

Namely, all that the Scriptures testify as to past events. The creation of the universe we did not witness, yet by faith we readily admit that it had its genesis, and that its originator was one God—the true and living God. On the testimony of the same revelation, we believe in the formation and fall of our first parents; the destruction by deluge of the world, and other facts recorded in Old Testament history; also in the incarnation of the Son of God; His immaculate life; His miraculous works; His atoning death; His triumphant resurrection; His glorious as-

cension to the right hand of the Father; in short, the entire substance of the mediatorial economy. By faith we rely on the unshaken testimony of Revelation in relation to these truths.

3. *Future realities.*

By this I mean the universal spread of Christianity; the resurrection of the dead, the general judgment; the everlasting destiny of the righteous and wicked. We are fully persuaded in our mind concerning these stern realities of the future. Though not the objects of our observation, yet by faith we accept them as facts on the testimony of God's word; just as we believe on human testimony that there are such cities as London, Rome and Pekin. "Faith in the Divine Revelation answers all the purposes of a convincing argument, or is itself, to the mind, a convincing argument of the real existence of those things which are not seen." * "Faith is the evidence of things not seen."

II. *Whom faith commends.*

"For by it the elders obtained a good report." These elders are the patriarchs whose names are emblazoned in this chapter. In succeeding discourses, we shall refer to the distinctive features of their faith, by which they were immortalized. Surely what hath faith wrought through these renowned saints of the Most High! Yea! how indebted to this inspiring principle is the world. Martin Tupper sings:

* Binney's "Practical power of faith." Sermon 1.

“Faith worketh wonders;

Never was a marvel done upon the earth, but it had sprung of faith;
Nothing noble, generous, or great, but faith was the root of the achievement;

Nothing comely, nothing famous, but its praise is faith.

Leonidas fought in human faith, as Joshua in Divine.

Xenophon trusted to his skill, and the sons of Mattathias to their cause;

In faith Columbus found a path across the untried waters.

The heroines of Arc and Saragossa fought in earthly faith.

Tell was strong, and Alfred great, and Luther wise by faith.

Margaret by faith was valiant for her son, and Wallace mighty for his people.

Faith in his reason made Socrates sublime, as faith in his science Galileo.

Ambassadors in faith are bold, and unreprieved for boldness.

Faith urged Fabius to delay, and sent forth Hannibal to Canæ.

Cæsar at the Rubicon, Miltiades at Marathon, both were sped by faith.

I set not all in equal spheres; number not the martyr with the patriot.

I class not the hero with his horse, because the twain have courage;

But only for example and instruction, that all things stand by faith.”

The faith which the elders inherited achieved extraordinary feats, because it involved unwavering confidence in God, and entire dependence on God. On account of such faith, they received the highest commendations from Heaven. Being dead, they yet speak through their faith. The good report they have received through faith has not yet ceased, nor shall it ever cease.

If we would obtain with them this “good report,” we must first obtain “the like precious faith through the righteousness of God and our Saviour Jesus Christ.” That faith that will lead us to lean on God, and trust in Him.

We must beware of confounding faith with belief.

It is possible to believe all that is written of God in His word, and yet be destitute of faith. Faith embraces belief, but belief does not necessarily include faith. Devils are not infidels in this latter sense. They believe all that the Scriptures teach concerning God, but it is not that belief which leads them to exercise faith in God. It is not an evangelical, trustful, fruit-bearing faith; but a cold, heartless, intellectual assent. The faith which the elders embraced and which all true believers possess, is that which leads them to place their full confidence in God, and to trust Him where they cannot trace Him.

To believe that the Lord Jesus Christ died on the cross is not significant in itself, more than the belief that He lived, unless we have faith in the atoning sacrifice of His death, and trust in that atonement for salvation. This is the faith that reports favorably of its subjects, before the highest throne in the universe.

The question is, Have we this trusting, life giving, Heaven-commending faith? We know what it means theoretically, but do we know what it means experimentally? To know it in the heart is infinitely better than to apprehend it by the intellect. In fact, we do not truly know what faith is, unless we experience it in the heart, and express it in our lives.

Suppose a Laplander were to visit one of the West India Islands, and some one there attempt to describe a delicious fruit growing in those parts. He might inform his visitor that the fruit grew on a tree of glossy green; that it was of a globular shape; of a

deep yellow tint, approaching to a beautiful light red color; that it belonged to the genus *citrus*, and so forth; but we question whether the Laplander would gain a very definite idea of what an orange is. But let him be led to an orange grove, and assured that he is welcome to lay hold of the fruit for himself—one moment's seeing and tasting will teach him more about an orange than an hour's botanical lecture. So we must lay hold of Christ, and taste the sweetness of His forgiving love, if we would find out the nature of true faith.

III. *What faith apprehends.* Verse 3.

Faith ascribes the formation of the universe to the word of God—that is, the oral word of God, not the personal word. The original word is derived from Rhema, not Logos. “He spake, and it was done; He commanded, and it stood fast.” Nothing was made without the Logos, the Son of God. It was the fiat of His word that caused countless worlds to leap into existence. Oh, what a wonderful framework has the word of our God produced!

“O thou eternal One, whose presence bright
 All space doth occupy, all motion guide,
 Unchanged through Time's all-devastating flight,
 Thou only God! there is no God beside.
 Being above all beings! Mighty One!
 Whom none can comprehend and none explore,
 Who fillest existence with Thyself alone;
 Embracing all—supporting—ruling o'er.
 In its sublime research, philosophy
 May measure out the ocean deep—may count
 The sand, or the sun's rays—but, God! for Thee
 There is no weight nor measure: none can mount

Up to thy mysteries ; Reason's brightest spark,
 Tho' kindled by thy light, in vain would try
 Thy counsels, infinite and dark ;
 And thought is lost ere thought can soar so high,
 E'en like past moments in Eternity.
 Thou from primeval nothingness didst call
 First chaos, then existence : Lord ! on thee
 Eternity had its foundations ; all
 Sprung forth from thee ; of light, joy, harmony,
 Sole origin ; all life, all beauty thine.
 Thy word created all, and doth create ;
 Thy splendor fills all space with rays Divine.
 Thou art, and wert, and shalt be ! Glorious ! Great !
 Life-giving, life-sustaining Potentate !" *

Faith teaches that there were no pre-existing materials employed in the uprearing of the universe. He resorted to no material means. He merely spoke, and out of chaos emerged *cosmos*. "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth." In the beginning, when there was neither matter nor time. Faith teaches that God framed and fitted up the whole planetary system in the unsurpassed order they are at present. Never was there an architect or builder like Him. Others are guided by certain plans and specifications, but God's plan was mapped out in His own infinite mind, and a word from His omnific lips gave immediate execution to that plan.

It is as astonishing as it is unaccountable, how some men are inclined to dispute the Divine existence, on the flimsiest pretexts. Nelson, in his work on "Infidelity," mentions the case of an English traveller

* From Derzhavin's Russian poem on "God."

by the name of Brydone. In describing the particulars of Mount Etna, he speaks of a stream of lava, which he discovered on the mountain's side. He thought it must have been thrown out by an eruption, which was mentioned *perhaps* by Polybius as having occurred 1,700 years ago. There was no soil on it. The particles of dust floating through the air had not fallen there, so as to furnish hold for vegetation, and these vegetables had not grown, and decayed again and again, thus adding to the depth of the soil. Such a work had not even commenced. He adds, that on some part of that mountain, near the foot, if you but sink a pit, you must pass through seven different strata of lava, with two feet of soil between them. Upon the supposition that 2,000 years are requisite for the increase of earth just named, he asks how seven different layers could be formed in less than 14,000 years? The chronology of Moses makes the world not half as old. He was jocular over his discovery, as it is natural for those who are prejudiced against the Scriptures, while hundreds were delighted with what seemed a confutation of the Bible. Though the traveller only *conjectured* that he had found lava mentioned by the ancient writer, and simply *thought* what he said, still it was enough for the frantic men who were wild over this analogical theory. Supposition was strong enough to rivet their unbelief. Moses was altogether wrong; Brydone, the traveller, was right. Another learned Englishman wrote in answer to this wild theory. He said that as Brydone's admirers seemed fond of arguing

from analogy, he would give them an additional illustration. He reminded them that the cities of Herculaneum and Pompeii, were buried by the eruption in which the elder Pliny perished 1,700 years since. Those cities have lately been discovered, and in digging down to reach their streets, six different strata of lava are passed through, with two feet of earth between them. And the famous Watson tells us, that if six different soils near Vesuvius could be formed in 1,700 years, perhaps seven might be made elsewhere in 5,000 years.* The geological calculations of some men are unsafe things to depend on. "The fool hath said in his heart, No God." Atheism does not begin in the head, but in the heart. It wishes there were no God, for the doctrine interferes with its carnal desires. As we gaze thoughtfully on this stupendous fabric, and all those million rolling worlds suspended above, pendulous in fluid ether, we exclaim with adoring lip and heart, "My Lord and my God! Thou hast out of things which do not appear, made the things that are seen."

"The fool hath said, 'There is no God:'

No God! Who lights the morning sun,
And sends him on his heavenly road,

A far and brilliant course to run?

Who, when the radiant day is done,

Hangs forth the moon's nocturnal lamp,
And bids the planets, one by one,

Steal o'er the night vales dark and damp?

* Nelson on "Infidelity," pp. 19-21.

No God! Who gives the evening dew,
The fanning breeze, the fostering shower?
Who warms the spring morn's budding bough,
And paints the summer's noontide flower?
Who spreads in the autumnal bower,
The fruit tree's mellow stores around;
And sends the Winter's icy power,
T' invigorate the exhausted ground?

No God! Who makes the bird to wing
Its flight, like arrow through the sky;
And gives the deer its power to spring
From rock to rock, triumphantly?
Who formed Behemoth, huge and high,
That at a draught the river drains;
And great Leviathan to lie,
Like floating isle, on Ocean's plains?

No God! Who warms the heart to heave
With thousand feelings soft and sweet,
And prompts the aspiring soul to leave
The earth we tread beneath our feet,
And soar away on pinions fleet,
Beyond the scene of mortal strife,
With fair ethereal forms to meet,
That tell us of an after life?

No God! Who fixed the solid ground
On pillars strong, that alter not?
Who spread the curtained sky around,
Who doth the ocean bounds allot?
Who all things to perfection brought
On earth below, in Heaven above?
Go, ask the fool of impious thought
That dares to say—"There is no God."

CHAPTER II.

HEB. XI. 4.

4 By faith Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, by which he obtained witness that he was righteous, God testifying of his gifts: and by it he being dead yet speaketh.

* * * "The unjust the just hath slain,
For envy that his brother's offering found
From Heaven acceptance; but the bloody fact
Will be avenged, and the other's faith, approved,
Lose no reward, though here thou see him die,
Rolling in dust and gore."—*Milton*.

WITH peculiar propriety has this chapter been designated "the chapter of faith." Here we have suggestive references to all the leading patriarchs of the old dispensation. The several illustrations adduced are intended to demonstrate the wonderful achievements of faith, together with the utter impossibility of accomplishing anything worthy, successfully and permanently, without it. This distinguished principle immortalized the elders. As they lived by faith, so they died in faith.

The first character claiming our attention is Abel. "By faith Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain." In Genesis 4, we have a brief but comprehensive account of the circumstances of his life and death. We learn from that chapter that "Cain brought the fruits of the earth as an offering unto the Lord." As an offering it was selfishly convenient, impiously insulting, and shamefully inferior. He

gave what first came to hand, thus imagining that any offering, irrespective of principle, was good enough for Him. Abel, however, "brought the firstling of his flock and of the fat." He offered the best he had. He examined carefully, and selected the "firstling of his flock." "And the Lord had respect unto Abel and his offering." God gazed with satisfaction on him. Ah! there is something significant in God's look. "He seeth not as man seeth; the Lord looketh on the heart." His gazing pleasingly on Abel and his offering, proves that the offerer's heart was right before God, and that his offering was worthy.

Let us also learn, that God expects the *firstling* from us—the first and best of our lives, and not the worthless remnant of them. Nor will he accept any offering of ours, until we have, first of all, given Him our heart. His language is not, "Give me thy money," but, "My son, give me thy heart." Having first given the heart, then He expects us to consecrate our energies and means for the promotion of His glory. He claims the heart in all that we do. If we so act, there can be no peril of the wily serpent of jealousy creeping into our bosom, as in Cain's case, and striking into us its deadly, venomous fangs.

THE FAITH OF ABEL.

1. *It was shown in the excellency of his offering.*

"By faith Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain." There has been considerable speculation as to why Abel's sacrifice was superior to

Cain's. Men like F. D. Maurice affirm that the offering of one was quite as proper as the other, and that the whole difference lay in the state of their hearts. There are others who maintain that the excellency was in the nature of the sacrifice offered. It is not a "question, they say, as to the men, but only as to their sacrifice; it is not a question as to the offerer, but as to the offering." Now it strikes my mind, that the character of the men, as well as the nature of their offerings, have something to do with this subject. Abel was a man of faith, and consequently his sacrifice was a superior one; and his sacrifice was a superior one, because he was a man of faith. It was Abel's faith that led him to sacrifice the firstling of his flock. "Without faith it is impossible to please God." Abel's sacrifice was well pleasing to God, for there was faith found in him who presented it. Cain's contemptible offering was displeasing to God. It was the offering of a faithless, Godless, and bloody assassin; and as an offering it was as improper as it was inferior. "O envy, the corrosive of all evil minds, and the root of all atrocious actions! It should have been Cain's joy to see his brother accepted; it should have been his sorrow to see that he had deserved rejection; his brother's example should have animated and directed him in the same path of godliness."*

We learn, then, that unless faith be the principle which actuates us in religious service, our actions will not be acceptable unto God. We must pray in

* Bishop Hall's Scripture History, p. 18.

faith, preach in faith, contribute in faith, and live by faith, if we would die in faith, and receive the Divine approval.

When the sainted Abel offered the firstling of his flock in sacrifice, he exercised unwavering faith in the covenant which Jehovah made in Eden, "that the seed of the woman shall bruise the serpent's head." He believed that the battle would be fought, and that the victory would turn in favor of the Captain of our salvation. That the "serpent's head," the devil, would be mortally wounded by the "seed of the woman," Mary's son. When Abel offered his "more excellent sacrifice," he foresaw by faith the Divine sacrifice which was to be offered on Calvary. In the anticipation of that wonderful sacrifice he offered his sacrifice. He confidently believed that the Messiah would voluntarily offer Himself at the appointed time as a sacrifice for sin, and that that sacrifice would yield the fullest satisfaction to God, while at the same time it would efficaciously wipe away the foulest guilt.

Had Cain possessed Abel's faith, he would have been taught by that faith, that "without shedding of blood there is no remission of sins." Like Abel, he would have offered a sin-offering in bloody sacrifice. In his faithless and contemptuous offering there is no recognition of the truth that he was a fallen sinner, and that he needed an atoning Saviour. Abel's sacrifice was therefore superior to that of Cain, for the reason that it was offered and was prompted by a higher principle than Cain's. Cain's bloodless sacrifice was

a repudiation of Christ's own bloody sacrifice. Abel's "more excellent sacrifice" was a grand testimony to the still more excellent sacrifice of the Son of God. It was a sacrifice in accordance with the revealed will of God; a sacrifice offered by a genuine heart and generous hand; a sacrifice befitting sinful man; a sacrifice presented in faith in view of the atoning sacrifice of the Lamb of God, on which he entirely trusted for salvation.

2. *Its offering received the Divine approval, which Cain's did not receive.*

Cain did a disreputable act when he offhandedly presented his inferior offering to God. He imagined that any kind of an offering would do for God, and was therefore an unrighteous, dishonorable man. Had he faith, he would not have acted so unworthily. This is why God was wroth with him, and rejected his oblation. Abel, on the other hand, obtained the testimony that he was righteous, God testifying of his gifts. How God manifested His approval of Abel's sacrifice we cannot exactly tell. Neither Moses nor Paul informs us. Some entertain the idea that fire descended from Heaven to consume Abel's sacrifice, leaving Cain's untouched. This is a very natural supposition, inasmuch as a similar phenomenon occurred on subsequent occasions. Doubtless, the offering received public approval, as the offerer himself received practical testimony that he was righteous. Gideon's sacrifice was consumed by fire. Manoah's sacrifice was burnt on the rock, and in its flame the

angel returned to Heaven. The first sacrifices of Aaron were consumed by holy fire from Heaven. When Elijah prayed on Mount Carmel, he was confident that God would answer by fire. It is certain that Abel was encouraged in some public and tangible manner, that God was pleased with his sacrifice. This public testimony was a favorable and indubitable proof of its excellency, and of Abel's righteousness.

There are myriads still in this glorious land of civil and religious freedom, who have the blessed assurance in their hearts that their large sacrifices and munificent offerings are acceptable unto God. They know by happy experience the truth of the philosophy which teaches that "it is more blessed to give than to receive." Is it not an incontrovertible fact, that the more we do for God and His cause, the more happy and blessed we feel? We are rewarded here in the satisfaction we feel that God is graciously pleased with us, and graciously accepts our offerings of faith.

But while there are those who received public and justifying testimony that they are righteous, God testifying of their gifts, there are those, alas! who, like Cain, demonstrate by their parsimonious and indifferent conduct that any offering may do for God. What they contribute is what they can easily spare. Their inquiry is not: "How much can I give to God, or do for Him?" but, "How little can I give or do?" And, like Cain, they are envious of those men who act more generously. It is related of a church member, that he was in the habit of boasting that he had been a

member of a Christian Church twenty-five years, and that it never cost him more than twenty-five cents during the whole period of his membership. Such admission was too much for the good minister who was his pastor, and he very fittingly replied: "And may the Lord have mercy on your poor, stingy soul." May we not earn the reputation of soul close-fistedness! May our anxiety ever be, "How much can I give, or do for Him who gave Himself for me?" What we have given conscientiously and cheerfully for God and His cause shall never be missed, while at the same time we shall receive the happy testimony that our persons and offerings are acceptable unto God. God forbid that we should be under Cain's brand. God grant that we may be of Abel's stamp.

3. *It bears the impress of immortality.*

"And through it, he, being dead, yet speaketh." Abel's body has been buried more than 5,000 years since, but his gifts still live. He and his offering will be remembered as long as the earth stands. There is not the slightest intimation of Cain's death, neither of his offering, only that which is discreditable. His death was not worthy of record, nor his oblation worthy of commendation; but of his brother it is expressly and emphatically stated that his sacrifice was a more excellent one than Cain's, and that by it, "he, being dead, yet speaketh." How forcible are the Psalmist's words: "The righteous shall be had in everlasting remembrance." Also the words of his son, Solomon: "The memory of the just is blessed,

but the name of the wicked shall rot." Abel's name is more popular to-day than ever it was. His memory is stamped with an immortal fame. The name of Cain has putrified many ages since, and his memory is despised. Abel yet speaks through his sacrifice. Cain is dumb these generations, and his offering doomed to everlasting contempt. Abel's offering speaks highly of his faith, and his faith speaks highly of his offering, and God speaks highly of both. These significant words may be fitly applied to tens of thousands of the illustrious departed. Though dead, their names emit the richest fragrance. Abel and Abraham, Joseph and Joshua, David and Daniel, Peter and Paul, are more popular to-day in the estimation of the Church and the world, being dead, than they were upon earth; while the names of Cain and Ham, Ahab and Jezebel, Haman and Nebuchadnezzar, Herod and Judas, are buried in shame and everlasting contempt. The names of Martin Luther and his associates, Melancthon and Zwinglius, Wesley and Whitefield, William Knibb and William Carey, John Bunyan and John Knox, Rowland Hill and Roger Williams, are ever embalmed in the sacred shrine of memory, while the names of Nero and Diocletian, Henry VIII. and Judge Jeffreys, King John and Queen Mary, Tom Paine and Voltaire, are remembered with unmitigated disgust.

As of Abel and the illustrious men spoken of, so of every true believer who has entered into rest it may be said, "He, being dead, yet speaketh." He speaks

through his example, deeds, and words. His holy life and consistent walk, his wise counsels and faithful warnings, his religious fidelity and sweetest resignation, still live and speak in the memory of multitudes, though his body moulders in the ashes of corruption. "He rests from his labors, and his works do follow him."

How shall it be with us? When we have passed away to the land whence no traveller returns, shall it be said of us, "He, being dead, yet speaketh"? Should the hands of love rear a tombstone over our mortal remains, may we have so lived as to deserve the epitaph, "He, being dead, yet speaketh."

"Life's labor done, as sinks the clay,
Light from its load the spirit flies,
While heaven and earth contrive to say,
How blest the righteous when he dies!"

CHAPTER III.

HEB. XI. 5.

5 By faith Enoch was translated that he should not see death; and was not found, because God had translated him: for before his translation he had this testimony, that he pleased God.

“The only righteous in a world perverse,
And therefore hated, therefore so beset
With foes, for daring single to be just,
And utter odious truth that God would come
To judge them with his saints: him the Most High
Rapt in a balmy cloud with wingéd steeds,
Did, as thou saw’st, receive, to walk with God
High in salvation and the climes of bliss,
Exempt from death, to show thee what reward
Awaits the good, the rest what punishment.”—*Milton.*

ENOCH’s biographical memoir is condensed into few but comprehensive words. Gen. v. 21–24. There is one statement, however, made by the sacred historian that is worth a thousand volumes. “And Enoch walked with God.” It is no exaggeration to affirm that there are volumes of recommendation in this single phrase. The historian Moses having mentioned about Adam, his wife, and two sons, he proceeds with the generations, ages, and deaths of the patriarchs till Noah, but when he arrives at the subject of our text he suddenly pauses. There is something in Enoch which attracts attention. It lays hold of the historian’s mind. All that is said of Seth, Enos, and Mahaleel, and others, is that they begat sons and daughters, and died. And that is all that may be

said of many in our day and generation, so aimless and useless are their lives. But when the writer reaches the case of Enoch, and states that he was sixty-five years when he begat Methuselah, he stops to particularize on his character. It demands more than a passing word. "And Enoch walked with God, after he begat Methuselah, three hundred years, and begat sons and daughters." If we bear in mind the number of days in the year, we shall be reminded of Enoch's years on earth. As a fitting conclusion to the sacredness of Enoch's memory, the historian reiterates his statement of his character with the appended distinction conferred on him, "And Enoch walked with God, and was not, for God took him." Gen. v. 24.

We have a brief reference to him in the Epistle of Jude, or Judas (not Judas Iscariot, but the brother of James, and cousin of our Lord Jesus Christ). Here we learn the prophetic character of his mission. Jude 14, 15. The author of the Epistle to the Hebrews passes a high encomium on Enoch's character, and places him among the ancient celebrities of faith. He speaks of him as having "pleased God."

THE FAITH OF ENOCH.

- I. *Enoch's walk of faith.*
- II. *Enoch's escort by faith.*
- III. *Enoch's commendation through faith.*

I. *Enoch's walk of faith.*

Enoch was a man of faith. "He walked with

God." We embody these words from Genesis in our text, as it is necessary to explain how he exercised his faith, and thus have an intelligent idea what walking with God means. He did not walk literally with God, for God was in Heaven and he on earth. God, too, is an invisible spirit, and possesses no corporeal parts. He has no flesh and bones, as we have. How could Enoch, then, a man in the flesh, walk with God, who is an invisible spirit? Our text introduces a word which solves the problem. That word is "faith." "We walk by faith, not by sight." In this sense believers to-day walk with God. Enoch's walk of faith with God implies three things.

1. *That they were harmoniously agreed.*

"How can two walk, except they be agreed?" is an ancient inquiry. It is an interrogative way of supposing the impossibility of the thing. It is rather an amusing, though no desirable spectacle, to witness two enemies meet. One is seen this side of the street, the other in the opposite direction. What occasions such estrangement and dislike? Dissension and disunion. They have neither the desire to walk together, nor to talk to one another. They wish themselves far away from each other. On the other hand, when we see two walk together, linked arm in arm, we naturally conclude that they are in perfect unison. So it was with this pious patriarch. He walked, as it were, arm in arm with God, thus teaching how mutually agreed and closely united they were.

2. *That Enoch held constant communion with God.*

His walk was not in vain. It was not an aimless peregrination. Some hallowed fellowship must have been carried on between them. Friends do not usually walk together without engaging in some conversation. A friendly walk means a friendly talk. Whether profitable or unprofitable, friendship will find some topic for conversation. The fact that Enoch walked with God, suggests the heavenly nature of their communion. Enoch would open his heart, and tell all its secrets; God would open His heart and tell Enoch His, "for the secret of the Lord is with them that fear Him, and He will show them His covenant."

There were other distinguished persons on earth at this epoch, such as kings, senators, nobles, and bards, but he found no opportunity of associating with these men, nor did he desire the opportunity, for he enjoyed the society of an infinitely superior associate, "the King of kings and Lord of lords." Multitudes of believers still have no prospect of associating with the so-called dignitaries of earth, nor do they particularly desire it, for one is their Friend who is high above all, God blessed forever. As long as they enjoy the fellowship of "the high and the lofty One who inhabiteth eternity," this is all that their aspiring soul desires. "Whom have I in Heaven, but Thee, and on earth I desire none other beside Thee. My flesh and my heart faileth, but God is the strength of my heart, and my portion for ever."

3. *That Enoch progressed in the Divine life.*

No figure can describe the idea of progress better than walking. If, after we have decided on a journey, we would reach our destination, we must keep constantly on our way. We must not dawdle on the road, or retrace our steps, or we cannot reach it. So of the way that leads to God's right hand. If we loiter, or drag along slowly and indolently, or turn to look back, we may never reach the blissful station. Let us, then, not be spiritual loafers. Like Enoch, may we cease not to walk with God till we are safely lodged in His everlasting embrace. Zion's pilgrims go from strength to strength; every one of them in Zion appeareth before God. Each step we make in the Christian life brings us nearer to God. We are nearer our home in Heaven to-day than ever we've been before. Let us make further advances in the Divine life. Let us not live on old experiences, but seek fresh tokens of good. Daily and hourly may we walk with God by faith, that we may at last walk eternally with him by sight.

II. *Enoch's escort by faith.* "He was translated that he should not see death."

Some try to persuade us that Enoch actually died, but was so suddenly translated to Heaven that he did not feel the effects of death. This supposition cannot be correct, inasmuch as the original word, *Metethi*, was never employed of the departure of any save Enoch and Elijah, which indicates that they went to Heaven in a different way from others. Un-

doubtedly Enoch underwent some important change in his condition before his removal, but that he did not die is evident. He might have undergone some transformation like that taught in 1 Cor. xv. 51. He was translated without tasting death. He left nothing behind him of his nature but his sins, and they were buried in the ocean of God's unfathomable love. He had seen death in various forms prior to his own triumphant exit from this world, but though he saw death in this sense, he never tasted its bitterness. He knew not what it was to suffer the pangs of dissolution. And why? For two reasons at least. To show the sovereignty of Jehovah, and to reward Enoch's faith. In consequence of his faith "he was translated that he should not see death." For three hundred years he had lived in Heaven in spirit and affection, and finally he was altogether absorbed there. The conversation of believers is still in Heaven. There their affections are set. There their treasure is, their God, their all. Sometimes faith lifts them to the very threshold of Heaven; there seems but one step between them and the interior of the palace, but then certain circumstances subsequently attract their attention again to earth. They resemble the aërostat (balloon) which ascends through the influence of gas. When that gas is consumed, the power of attraction or gravitation draws it back again. Scientists tell us if it were possible to destroy this power, that the aërostat would ascend to heights unutterable, never to return any more. So may we declare in reference to the believer. His jubilant

spirit sometimes lifts him high above earth, until he feels, with the Apostle, a desire to depart, and to be with Christ in the everlasting heights of glory. But there are subtle influences at work in this world, which draw him back again, viz., domestic cares, worldly trials, business difficulties, an evil heart, temptations of the flesh; but when these obstructions are removed, the soul shall then untrammelled wing its flight to the regions of everlasting day, and there, on the treetop of celestial bliss and blessedness, the spirit bird shall warble forth his song of undying melody. It so happened with Enoch. He was delivered from every influence which bound him to earth, and safely landed in God's own immediate presence, where there is fulness of joy, and pleasures for evermore. Thus was his faith gloriously acknowledged. "And was not found, for God took him." They had searched for him, but could not find him. We can imagine his devoted wife crushed with grief, sitting on the desolate hearth unable to conceive what had befallen her husband. The children come in from play, or return from school. She inquires of them concerning their father, but no tidings. The men-servants arrive from their work, and she anxiously inquires of them whether they had seen or heard of their master, but no tidings still. Intimate friends of the family drop in on a visit. She inquires of them if they knew anything about Enoch. They, too, had no satisfactory reply. So they all resolve to search for him. Not one stone is left unturned. They avail themselves of every means to discover his

whereabouts, but with all their efforts they cannot find him, because "God had translated him." He was conveyed from the altar to the throne.

III. *Enoch's commendation through faith.*

"Before his translation he received this testimony that he pleased God." God assured him before his removal that his conduct had pleased Him. This is the desirable state of mind that we all love to possess. We are glad to know that men are pleased with us, the servant his master, the maid her mistress, the mechanic his employer, the tradesman his customers, the physician his patients, the attorney his clients, the teacher his pupils, and the pastor his people. But, oh, what joy to know that we please God! Such was the testimony Enoch received. Let us illustrate this subject. A young man having filled faithfully and honestly, and with great credit to himself, some subordinate position in his employer's office, his superior privately expresses his great gratification and entire satisfaction with his services, and promotes him to the highest position in the firm. He is made chief clerk, or manager of the establishment. We see, therefore, that before his translation from a lower sphere to a higher one, he received the testimony that he pleased his employer.

Some years ago there was an agriculturist in England, the tenant of a 150 acre farm. He was always punctual in his payments, industrious in his habits, and particularly careful of the farm, cultivating some of the best land in the regions around. One day his

landlord visited him, and spoke as follows: "Henry, such a farm will be vacant next Christmas, which has 500 acres of land. I love that farm more than words can tell, for there I was born. I want a man to take it in whom I have the fullest confidence. Now, you are the man I have chosen, for I have every confidence in you." Before his removal from the smaller to the larger farm he received testimony that he pleased his landlord. So Enoch, the servant of God, prior to his translation from earth's labors to Heaven's reward, received this testimony that he pleased God. If we are Enoch's descendants by faith, we, too, in our bosom, shall have the happy testimony that we please God. And in our translation by death from this lower sphere to dwell eternally in a higher one, the Master shall testify, "Well done, good and faithful servant; enter thou into the joy of thy Lord."

CHAPTER IV.

HEB. XI. 6.

6 But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him.

“True faith and reason are the soul’s two eyes.

Faith evermore looks upward and descries

Objects remote; but reason can discover

Things only near—sees nothing that’s above her.”

—Quarles.

IN our last discourse we showed how Enoch pleased his God. In the words of our text, we learn the impossibility of pleasing God independently of faith. According to our text there are two features essentially necessary to true faith. The first is, a firm belief in the existence of God, and second, a firm belief in the moral government of God.

THE ESSENTIALS OF FAITH.

I. *That faith consists in the belief of the existence of God.*

“He that cometh to God must believe that He is,” *i. e.*, that He exists. Faith receives the testimony of revelation concerning God. It has no desire to see literally in order to believe. It is as satisfied with the reality of the object as though it were under personal observation. God, who is a spiritual being, is not perceivable by the bodily senses, yet the mind

of faith accepts the doctrine of the Divine existence. "The King immortal, eternal, invisible, whom no eye hath seen, nor can see," is apprehended by faith alone, and a belief in His existence and character is one of the first principles of revealed religion. This is, in fact, the fundamental doctrine in our religion. If there be no God, then we have no rational explanation to offer for our religious conduct. If there be no God, there can be no true religion, no moral government, no atonement, no salvation, no spiritual state, such as Heaven and hell. If we deny the being of God, we may as well deny all. In this matter the Atheist is certainly more consistent than the Deist. We cannot conceive of a being like God, to whom the formation of the universe is attributed, withdrawing Himself to some mysterious distance, leaving the worlds accidentally to govern themselves by what Deists call the "law of nature." Now, while we believe that these countless worlds are governed by certain specific laws, yet we insist that the idea of law implies a lawgiver, who sets the stupendous machinery in motion, and that lawgiver is the Creator, God. If, as infidels assert, there is no such being, no such lawgiver, no such moral agent, then we may as well burn our Bibles, shut up our Sunday Schools, stop the preaching of the Gospel, dispense with prayer meetings, and not trouble ourselves about the salvation of souls. We may live as epicures do, for we have no account to render for our conduct. If there be no God, we have no immortal spirit; we may eat, drink, sleep, and perish as the beast. Indeed, it

is no marvel that men who disbelieve the Divine existence, deny the doctrine of an immortal spirit.

But is there no God? Will conscience endorse Atheism? Shall we give credence to the sophistry of Godless sceptics? Because we have never personally or literally seen God, shall we conclude that He is not? Heaven forbid! We shall fall back on our "precious faith," which does not demand scientific or physical proofs of the Divine existence. Faith is the evidence itself of things not seen. The believer has never personally seen God, but by the medium of faith, his Heavenly companion, he accepts the inspired testimony concerning God. The half of life, if not more, is made up of faith. We believe much more than we have ever seen. We have never, perhaps, seen Melbourne, Bombay, or Hong-Kong, but we are not such fools as to deny their existence. We never saw Constantine the Great, William the Conqueror, Oliver Cromwell, Christopher Columbus and Roger Williams, but we would not question their existence. What proofs have we of their having lived? Nothing but history. A large portion of the Bible is composed of history—inspired history—where we have information concerning God and His marvellous works. We have never seen Jesus Christ, but what reason have we for rejecting the historical testimony concerning Him and the Father, more than any other history?

But let us remember, *atheism does not begin in the intellect*. It exists previously as a rule in the heart and life. "The fool hath said in his heart, No God." There

is nothing that leads to formal atheism more surely than impurity of conduct or imagination. "The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked." The carnal mind, which is at enmity against God, wishes Him out of existence. There is nothing that embitters the cup of sinful pleasure so much as the thought of a God. This is the poisoning ingredient in the cup of damnation, and the "No God" of the unbeliever simply means, "I wish there were no God, and if there be such a being, we don't want Him. We do not desire to know His ways." Many, if they had it in their power, would act to-day as the Roman soldiers did of old to the Son of God, pierce God to the very heart with the spear of their malignant hatred. In Psalm xiv. the secret of atheism is graphically set forth. That secret is the badness of men's lives. "They have gone aside from his ways, they are altogether become filthy. They are corrupt, they have done abominable works, there is none that doeth good." Thus they cannot afford to believe in the God of holiness and righteousness. Such doctrine interferes with their profligacy and ungodliness. The rottenness of their lives will not allow them to tolerate such a doctrine.

There are none so blind as those who will not see. If men would open their eyes, they would see the manifestations of God on every hand. There are sights and voices on every side loudly proclaiming the Divine existence. Nature, providence, history, the constitution of the human mind, the structure of human society, all bear harmonious testimony. "The

heavens declare the glory of God, the firmament showeth His handiwork." "The invisible things of Him from the creation of the world are clearly manifest, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead, so that we are left without excuse." Thus His presence is manifested to the most untutored, and the eye of reverent science sees Him in glowing colors. He is manifest in the heavens, to the astronomer; in the rocks, to the geologist; in the organization of matter, to the chemist; in the various forms of animal and vegetable life, to the naturalist; in the constitution and laws of the human mind, to the psychologist; in providence, to the student of history; and in beams of unparalleled splendor His glory shines on the believer in the face of Jesus Christ, "the brightness of the Father's glory and the express image of his person."

"The stony arch proclaims His power;
His pencil glows in every flower;
In thousand shapes and colors rise
His painted wonders to our eyes,
While beasts and birds with babbling throats
Teach us a God in thousand notes.
The meanest pin in Nature's frame
Marks out some letters of His name.
Where sense can reach, or fancy rove
From hill to hill, from grove to grove,
Across the waves, around the sky,
There's not a spot, or deep, or high,
Where the Creator has not trod
And left the footsteps of a God."

We *must* see God in His works, if we do not wilfully shut our eyes. The Psalmist significantly in-

timates that if we do not seek God, it is nothing strange that we do not find Him. To approach God aright, we "must believe that He is." It is absurd to approach the spiritual presence of One in whom we do not believe. This is the first element in faith, a firm conviction in the existence of Deity.

II. *That faith consists in the belief of the moral government of God.*

"And that he is a rewarder of them who diligently seek Him, or seek after Him." To believe in His moral government, especially that part of it which makes Him the hearer of prayer, is as necessary as to believe in His existence. Unless we have faith that God can, and will, answer prayer, we may well ask, "What is the Almighty that we should serve Him, or what profit shall there be if we pray to Him?" If He be not a rewarder of those who seek after Him, then our praying breath is spent in vain. We need not seek, for we shall never find. If there be no God, as the atheist insinuates, then there is no rewarder, for there is no Being to pray unto. Such a thought is most revolting and heartrending. There are those who find prayer the very balm, and joy, and strength, and blessedness of their being. They cannot live without it. They know that prayer has prevailing power. They know that on the wings of faith it ascends unto God, and calls His Almightyness to our relief, as the cry of a child enlists the help of his parent. And what a volume of prayer is evermore rising from earth to Heaven, "uttered or unexpressed," conscious or unconscious. The child's lisp,

just learning to say, "Our Father, who art in Heaven;" the gentle breathing of penitent and believing hearts; the loud cries of distress; the inarticulate groanings of the tried and tempted; the fervent requests made known with thanksgiving; the feeble whisper of dying lips that can only stammer, "Come, Lord Jesus, come quickly! Father! receive my spirit." Now, as I understand it, the atheistic fool's mission is to go round among men, and wherever he hears the faintest whisper of prayer, to say, "Be silent! It is all bosh;" to go to the penitent with his deep-hearted cry, "God be merciful to me a sinner;" to the broken hearted mother praying for her wandering child; to the aspiring saint breathing after higher holiness; to the dying man scarce able to clasp his hands, and look up; to go to all these and say, "Hush! Be silent, there is no listener; your words die in the air. There is no Divine Being to appeal to, or lean upon, in the whole universe!" Oh, horrible, blasphemous, and barbarous thought! Unworthy of civilization! It is so natural for frailty to flee to Omnipotence; for misery to appeal to Mercy; for the creature to invoke the Creator.

Let us not forget this feature in faith—the belief that "He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him." "Rewarder," not as one discharging a debt, but as one who favors us according to His own free, sovereign, and unmerited grace.

Have we the faith spoken of? Without it, it is impossible to please God. It matters not what we have, we cannot please God, unless we have faith. When we pray, we must pray in faith, or He will not

hearken unto us. We must "ask in faith, nothing wavering. For he that wavereth is like a wave of the sea driven with the wind and tossed. For let not that man think that he shall receive anything of the Lord." James i. 6-7. Yea! what we need to-day is that faith which is pleasing to God, and that shall feed our soul with abounding satisfaction. If this faith be ours it will lift us up, when others would cast us down. When we shall "walk through the valley of the shadow of death," we shall find light at eventide, for faith will shed an irradiating gleam, and unveil to our enraptured gaze the unutterable glories of eternity. In the prospect of the day of judgment, faith takes her stand upon the ruins of a dissolving universe, and while the elements are wrapt in flames around her, and the pillars of earth give way beneath her, and planets, and systems, starting from their orbits, are hurled into ruin through immeasurable space, she, with uplifted countenance and eyes immovably fixed on God, stands unmoved and undaunted, maintaining an unshattered trust and unshaken confidence in His everlasting faithfulness and love.

"As some tall mount, whose towering head aspires,
And, stretching heavenwards, reaches to the clouds,
Though the fierce tempest scowls along the sky,
And raging billows, with impetuous force,
Beat with tremendous fury on its sides,
While pealing thunders shake the world around.
Firm and secure it stands, defying alike
The tempest's fury and the ocean's rage—so faith,
Calm and unmoved, beholds the awful scene;
Looks with complacency on Nature's ruin,
And smiles upon the ashes of a burning world."

CHAPTER V.

HEB. XI. 7.

7 By faith Noah, being warned of God of things not seen as yet, moved with fear, prepared an ark to the saving of his house; by the which he condemned the world, and became heir of the righteousness which is by faith.

“At length a reverend sire among them came,
And of their doings great dislike declared,
And testified against their ways: he oft
Frequented their assemblies, whereso met
Triumphs, or festivals; and to them preached
Conversion and repentance, as to souls
In prison, under judgments imminent;
But all in vain! And now the thickened sky
Like a dark ceiling stood; down rushed the rain
Impetuous; and continued till the earth
No more was seen: the floating vessel swum
Uplifted, and secure with beaked prow
Rose tilting o’er the waves: all dwellings else
Flood overwhelmed, and them with all their pomp
Deep under water rolled.”—*Milton*.

No exercise can possibly be more profitable than the thoughtful perusal of the patriarch’s history as written by Moses in the book of Genesis. Enoch, of whom we last spoke, was greatgrandfather to the subject of our present thoughts, from whom a noble race descended—Methuselah, Lamech, Noah. These household names shine with undiminished lustre before the throne of God. The historical reference to Noah extends from Genesis v. to x., and is full of valuable instruction. The most remarkable event in his

life is that which is mentioned in the text—the preparation of an ark for the saving of his house, in obedience to Heaven's command. His faith in God preserved him and his from a destructive deluge.

THE FAITH OF NOAH.

From Noah's faith we learn three lessons :

I. *That faith in God demands no external proof of His determined purpose.*

“By faith, Noah being warned of God concerning things not seen, moved with fear, prepared an ark for the saving of his house.”

Faith accepts as true all that God has declared. It needs no physical evidence or syllogistic argument to confirm the divine declaration. He speaks, and it is enough. Whether it be a promise or threatening, faith credits the unquestionableness of its fulfilment. It is the evidence or conviction of things not seen. Faith does not require material observation or mathematical demonstration. These would cripple its power and strip its glory. In fact, it could no longer be considered faith, for that which is actually seen or demonstrated is absolute certainty. They are not the sons of faith who persist that seeing alone is believing.

Where the force of Noah's faith is felt and its beauty seen is in the reception of God's testimony, without any outward sign, that the threatened catastrophe would really occur. He believed that the stern threatening of Jehovah would culminate in a

stern reality. The incredulity of others led them to scoff the idea of such a calamity. Their sensual lives demanded sensual evidences. They looked on Noah's faith in the same light as the scoffers of the present day look on Christian faith, viz., as fanaticism. He, however, whom they taunted and ridiculed, foresaw by the eye of faith the distant future and the terrible judgment of an offended God descend upon them in a destructive flood, and "moved with fear, he prepared an ark for the saving of his house." "Verily the Lord knoweth the way of the righteous, but the way of the ungodly shall perish." Such as will not receive by faith the divine testimony must suffer the fatal consequences of their unbelief.

II. *That faith in God leads its subjects to obey promptly the will of the Almighty, in spite of apparent contradictory appearances.*

Noah was divinely admonished of things not seen as yet, things that did not seem likely to occur, yet by faith he was assured of their ultimate fulfilment. He could distinctly see by the eye of faith the flood of divine wrath sweeping all over the world. Now, as "All scripture is given by inspiration, and is profitable for reproof," etc., it may be well for us to examine this question of the deluge. The results of my reflections and calculations lead me to take the universal aspect of it. It is not so much that the deluge has left evidences of its existence in the fossils and rocks composing the crust of the globe that

convinces my mind as the evidence of the universal tradition of the deluge. In poetry, legends, mythology, and philosophical speculations among all nations we find traces, as it were, of the deluge. In these traditional and mythological fables we find several particulars mentioned: for instance, that the people of the antediluvian world had grown fearfully wicked and degenerate; that the gods were excited with hottest anger, and were resolved to drown all mankind by an appalling deluge. One point, in particular, is exceedingly interesting, showing the singular uniformity of these traditions, viz., the escape of a few individuals. They all agree in stating that the escaped were saved in a vessel of some kind. And then the strong language employed by the sacred historian is enough to convince us of its universality. "All the high hills that were under the whole heaven were covered," etc. Gen. vii. 19, 20.* The highest of these mountains was Ararat, on whose brow the ark rested, and which was seventeen thousand feet above the level of the sea. Professor Hitchcock, with all his learning and erudition, utterly fails to establish the "partial deluge theory," which, however argumentatively and plausibly set forth, is totally unscriptural. Noah, when warned of God in relation to this calamity, immediately heeds it, and the directions laid down by the Divine Architect as to the erection of the ark the pious carpenter instantly obeys. He doesn't stop to reason with God concerning the wis-

* See Bush on Gen. vii. 19, 20.

dom or desirability of the thing, but obeys at once. "According to all that God had commanded him, so did he." "He was a just man and perfect in his generation, and walked with God." God apprised him of what must happen, and however contradictory present appearances might seem, he resolved to believe, and arose to build. That there were many things to try his faith is manifest. He might have felt how unlike God was such a proceeding; but he casts no slur, nor does he express any surprise. Besides, there was no visible sign of such a catastrophe, no appearances in nature that justified such an expectation. There was not an angry ripple on the bosom of the lake, nor a heaving billow on the mighty deep, nor the slightest indication of a distant storm hovering across the skies. All was placid; never was there finer weather. The pages of the book of Nature hinted nothing, said nothing of God's righteous retribution. But there was another book, a revelation made to Noah, which he believed, for God made it. Though one hundred and twenty years nearly passed with noiseless revolution, his faith foresaw it all, discerned it clearly, and knew that these invisible things would inevitably occur. His "faith was the evidence of things not seen." Noah's intellect reposed on the omnipotence of God as able to cause such a calamity, and his affections reposed on the faithfulness of God, who promised him safety. And so he begins to build. Faith enables him to grasp the work with confidence and accomplish it triumphantly. Despite the difficulties and discour-

agements which beset him on every hand ; despite the unlikelihood of the deluge ; despite the reasonings of philosophers against the possibility of the event ; despite the ridicule and sneers and contemptuous epithets cast upon him, such as fanatic, alarmist, and wild projector ; despite the infamous ballads composed on him by commonplace rhyme-sters, as a doting and crackskulled enthusiast, his faith enabled him to hold on. He outlived all the raillery and satire, contempt and low jesting, as well as the philosophy of scientific men, and according to the plan laid down by the Divine Architect, the pious shipbuilder brought the undertaking to a successful issue. And, lo ! the sequel. The ark is completed. Noah and his family enter in. It is an eventful day. The graceless outsiders gather in immense numbers to jeer at him, shouting defiance to his warnings, taunting him that "soon he would be obliged to leave his romantic retreat and return to the scenes he had doomed to destruction. Look at him sailing on dry land ! ah ! ah !" But see ! "The Lord shuts him in." What an expression ! "The Lord shuts him in." Once the Divine Doorkeeper has fastened the ark, none of Noah's persecutors can break into it, as they surely would have done when overtaken by the flood. "When God shutteth, no man openeth ; when God openeth, no man shutteth." Divine genius invented the fastening, and no human ingenuity can unlock it. It was Heaven's own patent fastening.

Lo ! the heavens darken ! The threatening clouds

begin to gather. The winds begin to howl. The storm begins to rage. Heaven's artillery are ready for their work of desolation. The lightning flashes forth its destructive glare, and the thunder rolls in terrific claps across the sky. The windows of heaven are at last flung open. The fountains of the deep are broken up. The rain comes pouring down in Niagaran torrents, and, panic stricken, the scoffing unbelievers cry for help, but they cry in vain, for they cry too late. Before judgment begins, repentance is in order; after the judgment has come; appeal for help is in vain. One by one the once scoffing voices are hushed in the silence of death. In vain can those fly whom God pursues. The faithless are doomed to everlasting ruin, but the man of God is protected and saved. His prompt obedience to the command of God is rewarded. His preaching and praying and believing are divinely recognized.

III. That faith in God exalts its subjects to ineffable honor, while its strangers are involved in guilt and ruin.

It did so in Noah's case. "By faith he became the heir of righteousness." It was not an hereditary distinction. He was "made the heir of righteousness." As Abraham's faith was counted to him for righteousness, so it counted to Noah. The faith of Noah, as indeed the faith of every saint, is a justifying grace. Noah's faith was not specifically directed to Christ as its object; it was simply faith in the Divine warning in regard to the flood. Faith in its generic nature is always the same. By its ex-

hibition in his conduct he condemned the world; *i. e.*, the godless men who despised rather than respected his faithful warnings.

Unbeliever! there is yet a more terrible day approaching. That day will see, not a deluge of water, but a deluge of fire. Fire from above and from beneath will set the universe in a blaze! The elements shall melt with fervent heat. Let us then flee for refuge to the ark of safety, Jesus Christ. If found in this ark we are forever safe. It matters not how furiously the waves of life's stormy main or the billows of death's cold flood may foam and dash against us, safe in the ark, Jesus Christ, we shall escape unhurt, and find ourselves at last on the peaceful shores of immortality. The only friend that can introduce us into this ark is "faith." "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved." If we have this saving faith, then we are in the ark, and shall float securely on the Red Sea of redeeming blood into the haven of eternal peace. If this faith be not ours, then we are still in the gall of bitterness, and must be wrecked on the shoals of eternity. Believer! be of good cheer! Thy faith in God has made thee an "heir of righteousness," and if once an "heir of righteousness," never more an heir of wrath. And as sure as thou art an "heir of righteousness," thou shalt ere long inherit thy celestial possessions. Thine is the "inheritance incorruptible and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in Heaven for you who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation."

"Faith builds a bridge across the gulf of death
To break the shock blind nature cannot shun,
And lands thought smoothly on the farther shore.
Death's terror is the mountain; Faith removes
That mountain barrier between man and peace!
'Tis Faith disarms destruction and absolves
From every clamorous charge the guiltless tomb."

CHAPTER VI.

HEB. XI. 8-10.

8 By faith Abraham, when he was called to go out into a place which he should after receive for an inheritance, obeyed; and he went out, not knowing whither he went.

9 By faith he sojourned in the land of promise, as in a strange country, dwelling in tabernacles with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise:

10 For he looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God.

THE subject of our thoughts was a descendant of Shem. He was born three hundred and fifty years after the deluge. The magnanimity of his life and character justifies the great distinction conferred upon him. His trials being characterized by greater severity than others, the measure of his faith was larger. The more severely his faith was tried, the more resplendently it shone. Gracefully indeed does the title sit upon him, "the father of the faithful," for we are but children compared with him in this principle of faith. Yea! his faith is so pre-eminent that it is represented as eclipsing the faith of all other notable worthies. What indeed are we but dwarfs beside this giant in faith?

THE FAITH OF ABRAHAM, THE PILGRIM.

We learn two lessons from his exhibition of faith.

I. *That faith does not exempt its subject from trials.*

We have two sharp trials recorded in the text.

1. *There was the command to forsake one's native home.*

This first trial must have naturally awakened the most painful emotions in his mind. The very thought of leaving his father's house with all its early associations was indeed a bitter one to contemplate, yet by faith he cheerfully obeyed the Divine voice. See Genesis xii. 1-5.

We learn from the account given by the sacred historian, that Abraham's family were gross idolaters. In fact, the whole country round about was full of idolatry. In the midst of this prevailing tendency, Jehovah appeared unto the patriarch in Mesopotamia, demanding him immediately to abandon his country, and his home with its idolatrous superstitions. Under the guidance of faith he promptly obeyed the call. He collects his flocks and herds and goods together, and starts with his family on a journey toward an unknown land across the Euphrates. He leaves the familiar scenes of his childhood and the home of his youth, and commits himself wholly to the care and guidance of the mysterious Being who appeared to him there. Despite every disadvantage, such as his ignorance of the country, its customs, its inhabitants, and its peculiarities, and although he is obliged to march through unsettled and perilous tracts in obedience to the Divine will, he pursues his onward way, never repenting of his course. "He was called to go out into a place which he should after receive for an inheritance." That place was the land of Canaan, lus-

ciously described as "the land flowing with milk and honey." Leaving the Ur of the Chaldees, he arrives with his family at Haran, where they remain for a while. While there, he is called to experience another sore trial. His father dies at the advanced age of two hundred and fifty years. Having committed his mortal remains with filial sorrow to the care of mother earth, he renews his journey Canaanward. He does not hesitate one moment, nor does he linger to question the propriety of his pilgrimage. Doubtless, as in the case of Noah, he was tantalized by the scoffing and unbelieving as to where he was tramping, and when he intended to return; if he knew anything of the geography of the country, and so forth. It was enough for Abraham to know that He who commanded him to leave his native home would guide him safely to the promised land. Abraham's obedience of faith is well worthy of our imitation. We, too, are visited by a command from Heaven to arise, and journey under the guidance of an invisible leader and protector. We are to go forth, not knowing whither we go. On the earth the way is often dark and unintelligible. It often happens that the first step in the religious life plunges us into great affliction. It sometimes occurs that the believer feels compelled to renounce his secular occupation in obedience to the Divine call, if that occupation be one which conscience condemns. Nor do we know what lies before us. Let us therefore, like Abraham, make much use of our guide and companion, faith. Let us continue to tread the Heavenly

path, clinging tenaciously to God by faith, as a child in his father's hand.

The language before us serves to give a higher idea of the strength of Abraham's faith, "He went out, not knowing whither he went." Were he well informed respecting the land of Canaan, or had some acquaintance with the country, there would have been nothing extraordinary in his faith; but being entirely ignorant of the country, it makes his faith shine out the brighter and stronger.

We, as believers, like Abraham, are ignorant of the Canaan to which we are bound. We know not positively in what direction it lies, though instinctively led to conclude that it is upward. We are verily ignorant of the invisible region toward which we are daily advancing. Scarcely a few rays of the rising sun gild the distant mountain tops of that kingdom which lies "beyond the swelling flood." We know next to nothing of the many mansions promised us. What we do know is that Jesus is there, preparing a place for us; that sinless angels and sanctified souls are there; that it is a magnificent country beyond the conceptions of the highest intellect. We thank God for that piece of information. "But it doth not yet appear what we shall be." We know not what it is to be there. No one has ever returned to furnish us with the faintest description of its scenes and pleasures and engagements. But, as when Abraham approached nearer and nearer the confines of Palestine, the crest of Hermon, and the mountains of Galilee, began to reveal themselves

more clearly to his naked eye, so the called of God still, as they draw nearer and nearer the end of their pilgrimage, discern Beulah land shining from afar, and the faith of a lifetime is rewarded by the brightening gleams of the everlasting hills of glory, and of the sunlit city of our God. And all those who have left their Chaldea of idolatry, or who have forsaken their carnal desires, and have torn themselves from every entanglement to follow their Lord, shall be graciously permitted to enter the Canaan of everlasting rest.

2. *There was the extraordinary inconvenience to which he was exposed.*

“By faith he sojourned in the land of promise, as *in* a strange country, dwelling in tabernacles with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise.” 9 v.

When he departed from Chaldea into Canaan, it was with the promise of being *shown* another land. Genesis xii. 1. There was no specific promise then made of *giving* the land. But after a short sojourn in that land, God spoke to him, saying, “Lift up now thine eyes, and look from the place where thou art, northward, and southward, and eastward, and westward: for all the land which thou seest, to thee will I give it, and to thy seed for ever.” Genesis xiii. 14–17. Here we have the most explicit promise that God would give Abraham the land of Canaan for an inheritance, yet we read that he never possessed any land in that country, “No; not *so much as* to set his

foot on." Acts vii. 5. He journeyed from place to place in a strange land, dwelling in tents, now giving way to a headstrong nephew, and presently to a rival chief. He was literally a pilgrim and a stranger. Nothing could have tried his character more thoroughly than this migratory mode of living. He travelled along without the realization of the promise down to the death of Sarah. He who had been promised the land of Canaan has not yet received it. It is still in the hands of foreigners. There is some reason for delay. The delay continues; and the long delay gives exercise to the patriarch's faith. Here on this point we may read the emphatic harangue of Stephen in his address to the Jewish Sanhedrim. Acts vii. 2-6. Yet despite this inconvenient mode of living, the patriarch's faith sustained his spirit in the most magnanimous manner.

If we are the children of Abraham by faith, we too are sojourning in a strange land. This world is not our home. We are pilgrims and strangers on earth. Heaven is our home. We sojourn here, as it were, in earthly tents. We are always on the move. We are subjected to many inconveniences. We meet with numerous disappointments and trials. As that prince of preachers, Spurgeon, says, "To-day I may want for nothing. To-morrow I may be like Jacob, with nothing but a stone for my pillow, and the heavens for my curtains. But what a happy thought it is, though we know not where the road winds, we know where it ends. It is the straightest way to Heaven, to go round about. Israel's forty years wandering were,

after all, the nearest path to Canaan. We may have to go through trial and affliction. The pilgrimage may be a tiresome one, but it is safe. We cannot trace the river upon which we are sailing, but we know it ends in floods of bliss at last. We cannot track the roads, but we know that they all meet in the great metropolis of Heaven, in the centre of God's universe."

What was not fulfilled in Abraham's day was accomplished five hundred years afterward in his descendants. His faith anticipated the ends of those years, and made future events as present.

II. *That faith does not leave its possessor destitute of encouragement.*

"For he looked [by faith] for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God." That is, a city which is firmly built or well founded. His faith

1. *Looked forward with hopeful expectancy to an enduring city.* "A city which hath foundations."

Abraham looked by faith for a permanent home somewhere in God's universe. Faith assured him of a safe arrival in that home; buoyed up his soul in seas of trial; prompted him to follow the Divine counsel, and suffer the Divine will, and eventually landed him in the pilgrim's city. When anticipating that city of immovability and immortality, he could well afford to dwell in tents in this passing world. But even in this present life he received manifold more than he left behind in Chaldea. Everything he

laid his hand on prospered. His riches multiplied wonderfully. He required whole territories for his encampments and demesnes. The hills of Hebron were covered with his flocks. When he and they moved, it was like the grand march of an army. Yet notwithstanding all this, he viewed all these possessions as transitory and fading. His principal riches consisted in nobler treasures than earth can afford, and more durable. "He looked for a city which hath foundations." That city ultimately became his everlasting possession. Before his earthly remains were consigned to the cave of Machpelah, his soul ascended upward, a fullgrown inheritor of celestial riches. Well could he have afforded being a stranger and sojourner on earth, for whom was reserved so rich an appanage as Paradise itself.

So can we, if we belong to the "household of faith." We can well afford to submit patiently and cheerfully to the changes and chances of this mortal life, when faith encourages us to foresee the grand realities that loom vast and glorious, beyond this fleeting world of shadows, in the everlasting city of our God. Let trials come. Let the world gnash its savage teeth at us. Let seas of persecution dash their billows in fury against us. Let disease and death come to drink the lifeblood of our heart, and pull the temple of our body in ruins to the earth, we can afford it all. "For we know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens." His faith,

2. *Looked forward with hopeful expectancy to a Divinely prepared city.* "Whose builder and maker is God."

A sufficient guarantee of its durability. The designer and builder is God. We have some idea of the solidity and durability of God's work in the formation of our mighty planet, and the innumerable worlds that twinkle in the everlasting stars above. But heaven and earth must pass away. They shall perish. As a vesture shall they be folded up, and be changed. But the city to which we are bound shall never perish, or grow old, or be folded up, for its builder and maker is also its head. As the lamented Guthrie says, "A city never built with hands, nor hoary with the years of time; a city whose inhabitants no census has numbered; a city through whose streets rushes no tide of business, nor nodding hearse creeps slowly with its burden to the tomb; a city without griefs or graves, without sins or sorrows, without births or burials, without marriages or mournings; a city which glories in having Jesus for its king, angels for its guards, saints for citizens; whose walls are salvation, and whose gates are praise." "The city," as the apocalyptic seer says, "which had no need of the sun, neither of the moon, to shine in it: for the glory of God did lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof." Shall this divinely prepared city be ours to inhabit? Have we the title for it? Can we produce our certificate qualifying us for the place? Shall it be said of us: "These pilgrims have come from the city of destruction, for the love which they

bear to the King of this place;" and then be able with the pilgrims to hand our certificate of faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

Would we be where Abraham is, we must peregrinate by faith through the wilderness of this life, to the Canaan of celestial rest above. It is said that "many shall come from the east and from the west, and from the north and from the south, and shall sit down with Abraham and Isaac and Jacob, in the kingdom of Heaven." To be able thus to sit, we must like them walk thither by faith.

"Abraham obeyed the Lord's command,
From his own country driven;
By faith he sought a promised land,
But found his rest in Heaven.

Thus through life's pilgrimage we stray,
The promise in our eye;
By faith we walk the narrow way
That leads to joys on high."

CHAPTER VII.

HEB. XI. 11-12.

11 Through faith also Sarah herself received strength to conceive seed, and was delivered of a child when she was past age, because she judged him faithful who had promised.

12 Therefore sprang there even of one, and him as good as dead, *so many* as the stars of the sky in multitude, and as the sand which is by the sea shore innumerable.

FEEBLE as Sarah's faith may have been, it was of a genuine stamp, and though perhaps at first it was not larger than a grain of mustard seed, it grew stronger and greater, and proved mighty enough to hurl mountains of obstacles into the sea.

As the companion of Abraham, she deserves honorable mention. She is deemed entitled to occupy a place among the galaxy of illustrious names immortalized in this chapter.

Even as in the case of Abraham, her name was signalized with a characteristic change. Her original name was "Sarai," which signifies "my princess," or "my lady," but when her husband was subsequently apprised that his seed should be as numerous as the stars, "the burning blazonry of heaven," her name was changed to "Sarah," which means "princess of a multitude," while his own name was changed from "Abram," which signifies "prince," to "Abraham," which means "father of many nations." Her name, too, is honored by Peter, as an example of deferential wives, and as worthy of

the distinction of spiritual motherhood. In addressing Christian women, the apostle, in speaking of Sarah, says, "Whose daughters ye are."

THE FAITH OF SARAH.

I. *It was exhibited under the most improbable circumstances.*

They were briefly as follows: Three angels visited her distinguished husband, assuring him that Sarah would be blessed with a son, from whom was to spring a great nation. She, happening to be nigh, overheard the colloquy. No sooner did she hear the strange tidings, than she laughed within herself. She could not comprehend that such an event in the nature of things could be possible, "seeing that they were both old, and well stricken in age." Jehovah, detecting her incredulous laugh, said to Abraham, "Wherefore did Sarah laugh, saying, Shall I of a surety bear a child, which am old? Is anything too hard for the Lord?" Significant language! "What is impossible with men is possible with God." He who formed woman out of a human rib, and caused the "holy child Jesus" to be born of a virgin, could give power to Sarah in her old age to conceive, and bring forth the son of promise.

Though Sarah denied that she gave way to her risibilities, we have no intimation of her incredulity after this. Unlikely as were the circumstances, she was thoroughly convinced by this conversation that God's power was unlimited—that He was able to fulfil all that He had promised. Her faith strength-

ened and increased, so that it triumphed over doubt, and overcame every difficulty. The promised blessing was faithfully performed. "She was delivered of a child when she was past age."

How often have we exhibited the same incredulous deportment which Sarah at first manifested. Professing faith in God's Almighty power, how often have we in life and action contradicted our profession. We acted as though we felt that there were some things too hard for the Lord. The grand struggle is to exercise faith, not when the firmament of our joy is unclouded, or when everything appears favorable, but when events are adverse to its exhibition. We remember the lamentable failure of the disciples in their efforts to relieve that distressed man tormented with a devil. Mortified with their failure, they anxiously inquire the secret of their non-success. What was the Master's reply: "Because of your unbelief, for verily I say unto you, If ye have faith as a grain of mustard seed, ye shall say unto this mountain, Remove hence to yonder place, and it shall remove; and nothing shall be impossible unto you." It is for the lack of faith that we as churches and as Christians are so often frustrated in our efforts for God. While we attempt great things for God, we must not forget to expect great things from God. Between the faith that expects, and the will that works, success in Christian endeavor is ours. We are prone to look too much on the human side, and to trust too much in our own schemes, and so, when we fail, we are apt to grow despondent. What we need is to

“have faith in God,” to believe that His purposes will be consummated, despite improbabilities and difficulties and opposition. We need to direct upward the eye of faith. He who sitteth in the heavens knows nothing of improbabilities or impossibilities. He speaks, and it is done. He commands, and it stands fast. Heaven and earth shall pass away, but His word shall not pass away.

Did we but exercise that faith in God we ought, we should soon discover that these terrible lions of difficulties we dreaded in the path of duty were after all but harmless lambs. What we imagined a huge mountain will turn out to be an empty shadow. We are told of William Jay, of Bath, that he once dreaded, on a foggy day, a tall figure that seemed to approach him. The nearer it drew the more it magnified, and the greater was his dread ; but, lo ! when they came together, it turned out to be his own brother John.

The faith of our heroine ultimately overcame all difficulties. It shone forth as the sun through the cloudy curtains of the sky. What faith enabled our illustrious mother to achieve, it is yet capable of doing. “Only believe, and it shall be done.” The faith which gave power to Sarah to conceive still

“Laughs at impossibilities
And cries, it shall be done.”

II. *It recognized the agency of supernatural power.*

This extraordinary circumstance in Sarah’s life is only an evidence of the Divine Almightyness and

faithfulness. It is a practical exemplification of the words, that "nothing is too hard for the Lord." In our text Sarah is represented as acknowledging God's faithfulness to His covenant. "She judged Him faithful who had promised." She placed in the word of His covenant unlimited confidence. And of Abraham it is emphatically declared by the Apostle Paul "That he staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief; but was strong in faith, giving glory to God; and being fully persuaded that, what he had promised he was able also to perform." Romans iv. 20-21. What was to all human appearance a matter of impossibility, this sainted couple believed was within the limits of God's power. They felt perfectly persuaded that God's promise would be literally fulfilled. God's faithfulness was nothing new or strange to Sarah. While she sojourned with her family in the land of promise, she experienced His unchanging faithfulness; and when the hour of her dissolution arrived, He did not forsake her. She piously recognized the agency of the Divine power. By faith in that power she was enabled to carry out the Divine purpose in the birth of Isaac.

This miraculous interposition has not since been repeated; nevertheless, myriads of mothers have rejoiced over the spiritual birth of their children; children that seemed to have wandered too far into the wilderness to be restored; that seemed to have sunk too deep in vice to be rescued; whose hearts seemed closed against religious influences; yet before and after death they have blessed the grace which regen-

erated them, and made them the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus. Many a mother, in view of her child's conversion, has exclaimed with good old Simeon: "Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, for mine eyes have seen thy salvation." Yea, many a mother in Paradise has had her joy augmented in seeing her offspring brought to God. The work of conversion is supernatural. No power save God's can regenerate the human soul. Let us humbly acknowledge it, and judging Him faithful who has promised to answer prayer, let us bear our children in the arms of faith to the mercy seat, that they may be born again.

III. *It witnessed an astounding phenomenon.*

"Therefore sprang there even of one, and him as good as dead, so many as the stars of the sky in multitude, and as the sand which is by the seashore innumerable." Our American Bible Union and the recent revision of the New Testament gives us substantially the same version. The signification of this is that Abraham was dead as to the power of procreation. Neither he nor Sarah possessed any longer those energizing, vital powers characteristic of youth, which makes the event referred to quite marvellous and miraculous. To all human appearance, it seemed as improbable for Abraham and Sarah to have a son at their time of life, as for the very dead to produce children. Yet, on account of their faith, God made what was humanly speaking impossible, to come within the range of His power. As the reward of her faith, she received the fulfilment of the Divine

promise, and became the mother of a mighty nation. Jehovah was resolved to keep His covenant, even though it should call forth His miraculous interposition and power. So let our faith be such as Sarah's, that will lead us to put our trust in God's power and faithfulness, and he may perform wonders for us. We have reason to lament the barrenness of Zion. But while we thus deplore her condition, let us plead that the power of the Holy Spirit might overshadow her, for "when Zion shall travail, she shall bring forth her sons and daughters." From the conversion of one soul may spring the spiritual birth of myriads. Sarah-like, let us "judge Him who hath promised," and we may rest assured that we shall not be doomed to disappointment.

To women especially would I commend the character of Sarah. She was as beautiful in principle as she was in person. Hers was physical beauty, and, what is infinitely better, hers was moral beauty. Physical beauty may not be yours to possess, which, after all, is but skin deep. But if you have faith in Sarah's God, a higher type of beauty may be yours, which is soul deep.

"What is woman, what her smile,
Her look of love, her eyes of light?
What is she if she in her heart deride
The blessed Saviour? Love may write his
Name upon her marble brow,
Or linger in her curls of jet,
The light spring flower may scarcely bend
Beneath her step; and yet, and yet,
Without this choicest grace,
She is a lighter thing than vanity."

CHAPTER VIII.

HEB. XI. 13-16.

13 These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth.

14 For they that say such things declare plainly that they seek a country.

15 And truly, if they had been mindful of that country from whence they came out, they might have had opportunity to have returned.

16 But now they desire a better country, that is, an heavenly: wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God: for he hath prepared for them a city.

THAT faith is not an idle or inactive principle is clearly established in this chapter. By it the elders or patriarchs of old obtained a good report. Their names and deeds have been immortalized, for the reason that faith was the root-principle whence their good works sprang. Thus "Abel by faith offered a more excellent sacrifice than Cain." Under the inspiration of faith, Noah, being warned of God concerning the approaching deluge, "prepared an ark to the saving of his house." Under the guidance of faith, he who was called Abraham, went to the place promised as his inheritance, "not knowing whither he went." Moved by this heroic principle, Moses renounced his worldly prospects, preferring a life of suffering with God's family to a life of luxury with God's foes. We have graphic illustrations of the

activity and attainments of faith in the persons of Enoch, and Joseph, and David, and Samuel, and others, who are described in glowing terms as having "subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness, stopped the mouths of lions, quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, out of weakness were made strong, waxed valiant in fight, turned to flight the armies of the aliens."

Our text, though partly applicable to all these illustrious saints, bears direct reference to Abraham and Sarah, Isaac and Jacob. Enoch did not die, therefore it cannot have reference to him. The promises of the text were first made to Abraham that he should be given the land of promise, and be the father of a mighty nation. These same promises were renewed to his posterity. These ancient worthies not only died believers, but they died in the very exercise of faith. As they lived, so they died in the same sweet frame, leaning upon the same glorious principle, hugging the promises, and venturing their whole dependence with confidence upon them. God's promises and power, His covenant love and grace, were as strengthening and precious to them in their dying hour as in the hour of life and health.

DYING IN FAITH.

I. *What is it to die in faith?*

1. *To die trusting God.*

This is familiar language; a stereotyped phrase it may be, nevertheless it is an all important one. To

die mistaken in this matter is to die mistaken for ever. We must feel as well as know what trusting in God means—realize it experimentally as well as know it theoretically. Faith implies trust. To die in faith means to die trusting in God. To die in faith is not to make a leap in the dark, but to leap into the arms of Omnipotence, and to find ourselves in the land of light.

This is how Abraham and Sarah died; Isaac and Jacob; Rebekah and Rachel; when they reached the end of life's pilgrimage, their souls rushed to the everlasting arms of an ever faithful and ever keeping covenant God.

Turning from the Old Testament to the New, the noblest example of one dying in faith is the Lord Jesus Christ. That Father whose face is hid from Him, till He is constrained to cry, "Eloi, Eloi, Lama Sabacthani," into His hands He breathes His spirit in fullest assurance of acceptance. The first Christian martyr, Stephen, when perishing beneath the merciless shower of stones, imbibing the spirit of his Master, and seeing Him standing on the right hand of God, cries, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit." He commits his spirit to One abundantly able to preserve it. This is how the apostle died, whose maxim was "For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain." Hear him exclaim, "For I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that He is able to keep that which I have committed unto Him against that day." This is the spirit in which our Puritan fathers died, and that "glorious army of martyrs," who welcomed the

most barbarous death rather than deny Him who bought them by His blood. They could sing "Hallelujah," and leap with joy in the midst of devouring flames. And why? Because they died trusting God. They saw by faith that Saviour who bled and died for them, ready to receive them in His Almighty arms.

2. To die recognizing God's sovereign and unmerited grace.

Thus Abraham and the patriarchs, Paul and the Apostles died; and thus all true believers die. When Andrew Fuller was told on his dying bed by a Christian brother, that he knew of no man in a happier situation than Mr. Fuller was, a good man on the verge of immortality, he lifted up his feeble hands, and exclaimed, "I am a great sinner, and if I am saved, it must be by great and sovereign grace—by great and sovereign grace. I know whom I have believed. My hope is such that I am not afraid to plunge into eternity. I feel satisfaction that my times are in the Lord's hands. I have been importuning the Lord, that whether I live, I may live to Him, or whether I die, it may be to Him. Flesh and heart fail, but God is the strength of my life and my portion for ever. I have done a little for God, but all that I have done needs forgiveness. I trust in sovereign grace and mercy alone. God is my soul's eternal rock, the strength of every saint. I am a poor sinner, and my only hope is in the Saviour. My mind is calm; no rapture, no despondency. I am not dis-

mayed. My God, my Saviour, my Refuge, to Thee I commit my spirit. Take me to Thyself; bless those I leave behind." This is what I call dying in faith; the only sound way of dying. To venture one's all on God; to cast ourselves on His sovereign love and mercy. Just like a swelling river, which, after many turnings and windings, pours itself at last with a central force, a mighty, rapid stream, into the bosom of the ocean; so the believing soul, after the turnings and windings of life, pours itself by faith into the ocean of God's unfathomable love and unmerited grace. Emptying all its trust on Jehovah, it is hid with Christ in God.

If ever we are saved, it must be through the same sovereign and unmerited grace; and if we are by faith His, we shall not desire to compromise the Divine glory. He who saves us by His grace we shall gladly crown Lord of all.

3. *To die bearing witness to the truth.*

To die in an outward, barren profession, is not to die in faith. To die nominal church members, is not to die in faith. Many a good-for-nothing church member will find his mistake, when he draws near to the swellings of Jordan. To die in faith, we must live a life of faith, and bring forth the fruits of faith. "Hail, Master!" will not suffice in the judgment morning. "Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of Heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father, who is in Heaven." Unless there has been entire consecration to

God's service, all our empty profession will be of no avail. The Judge shall say, "Depart from me; I know you not, ye workers of iniquity." If we would die in faith, we must die with religion in our hearts, as well as in our heads; yea, with religion *in* our lives, as well as *on* our lips. We must work while it is day, and be faithful unto death, if we would receive the crown. With our last laboring breath, our lisping, stammering tongues must testify of God's faithfulness, and the value of God's truth. As one of old said, "As a dead man cannot inherit an estate, no more can a dead soul inherit the kingdom of God."

II. *What supports the faith of dying believers?*

"The promises."

"Not having received the promises," that is, their fulfilment, "but having seen them afar off," that is, their realization. The patriarchs, to whom these words were primarily addressed, did not actually receive in their lives the fulfilment of the promises in the bestowal of the land of Canaan and in the blessing of a numerous posterity. Notwithstanding this, they were confident that every promise made by God would be verified. Their faith was a tried one, and on its foundation they could venture into eternity. Let us observe their attitude toward these promises.

1. *They saw their entire fulfilment in the distant future.*

Seeing them by faith "afar off," they were sustained and cheered. They could die peacefully,

trusting in the honor and fidelity of God. They beheld, by the eye of faith, the blissful day when He would substantiate in their posterity what He had faithfully promised them. Faith is not easily cast down. She has a penetrating eye, and can peer into the far off future, and see every word and promise of God fulfilled.

2. *They believed in their reality.* "And were persuaded of them."

The best ancient manuscripts, and the recent revisions of the New Testament, omit this sentence. Yet we have no doubt that the patriarchs were fully persuaded of the reality of God's promises. They trusted in the veracity of God, and relied on His faithfulness to perform all that He had promised.

So may we believe, and trust, and rely, "for all the promises of God are yea, and Amen, in Christ Jesus."

3. *They greeted, or saluted them.*

Not "embraced them," as in King James' authorized version. The figure is probably taken from the incident of two intimate friends, who, after a long separation, affectionately salute each other, and welcome one another in the arms of friendship; so by "embracing the promises," we are to understand a warm salutation to them, and a cordial welcome of them. The dying believer by faith clasps the promises of God to his soul, and they are more precious to him than words can describe. Though all the promises are not fulfilled here, he loves them, and lives on

them as though they were present realities. As he wends his way along through the wilderness of life, and wades at last through "Jordan's stream and Death's cold flood," he jubilantly sings :

"By faith I see the land,
The port of endless rest;
My soul! thy sails expand
And fly to Jesus' breast.
O may I reach the heavenly shore
Where winds and waves distress no more."

III. *What the subjects of faith aspire after.*

Confessing themselves strangers and pilgrims on earth, they live as those born from, and for a higher sphere. Nothing here satisfies their longing desires. "They desire a better country, that is, a heavenly." Are we characterized by the same aspirations? Or do we live as the worldly and carnal, suckling all our pleasures from the barren paps of this empty world? May God forbid. Nothing short of God and immortality can satisfy the longings and desires of our souls.

Had Abraham and his family been mindful of that country whence they came, they might have had opportunity to return. But they had no desire to return, once God commanded them to forsake it. Nor have we, if called of God, any disposition for returning to the country of our follies, and idols, and vanities. Our backs are forever set against it! As pilgrims, we are travelling onward and heavenward. We have left the city of destruction, where there is nothing but death and destruction. Our faces are directed toward Mount Zion, the city of the living God, where there is life for evermore.

If we are heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Jesus Christ, let us live above the crosses of life. Whatever obstacles meet us in our pathway, may they be helps, and not hindrances in our advances in the pilgrim life. Though a frowning world thunder their anathemas against us; though the tongue of slander try to injure us; though hypocritical dissemblers, Judas-like, betray us; though hell's artillery fire their malignant volleys upon us; shielded by faith, we shall be able to quench the fiery darts of the wicked, and, "more than conquerors through Him who hath loved us," we shall march into the everlasting city of our God, while the harps of Paradise shall strike their welcome strains of congratulation. Let us, then, take fresh courage, and press on our way. "No weapon formed against us shall prosper." Our God is faithful; our Redeemer liveth. His word is a sure covenant of faith, and an anchor of life and hope in death. He will never leave us nor forsake us."

Mark the character of the country to which we are bound.

"A better country." It is better in every respect; better in its atmosphere; better in its activities; better in its enjoyments; better in its associations; better in its durability. The inheritance there is "incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away." It is better, because it is a heavenly country.

Mark, finally, the transcendent status of the aspirants of faith.

"Wherefore, God is not ashamed to be called their God, for He hath prepared for them a city." Surely, "blessed are they whose God is the Lord." Exalted beyond description are all those who aspire for

nothing short of that better country, which is a heavenly one. It is for this reason that God is not ashamed to be called their God. He is delighted to acknowledge such, and they shall be gathered home as His jewels. For such aspiring spirits He hath prepared a city. It is a city "prepared in God's eternal counsels, by the progressive acts of redemption;"* and by Divine intercession and power. Would you know its description? The best given is that by John, in his Apocalypse. He says, that even the "street of the city was pure gold, as it were transparent glass," and that the "foundations of its walls were garnished with all manner of precious stones." Rev. xxi. 10-23. It is worthy in every respect of its Architect and Builder. It is worthy of our highest aspirations to become its citizens.

"Our home is a land where the echoes are ringing,
Through groves by the feet of the Seraphim trod;
Where the fountain of life eternally springing,
Roll on its bright streams through the city of God.

"There, there, we shall seize on our heavenly treasure,
And nought from our souls shall their happiness sever;
We'll dwell on the banks of the river of pleasure,
And drink of its waters for ever and ever.

"There the sorrows of parting no more shall affright us,
When past are the griefs of this time-wasting story;
Nor the grave shall divide, nor shall disunite us,
Eternally joined in the fulness of glory.

"What, then, is the grave, though so wild and uncheering,
To us its dim vale speaks of triumphs to come;
We hail with delight the dark portal appearing—
That grave is Earth's limit, and Heaven is our home."

* Jamieson, Fausset, and Brown *in loco*.

CHAPTER IX.

HEB XI. 17-19.

17 By faith Abraham, when he was tried, offered up Isaac: and he that had received the promises offered up his only begotten son,

18 Of whom it was said, That in Isaac shall thy seed be called:

19 Accounting that God was able to raise him up, even from the dead; from whence also he received him in a figure.

“Far in that sunny eastern land,
Beneath the bright unbending skies,
We see the noble veteran stand,
Preparing a strange sacrifice.
His eyes are summer-heavens of faith;
No shade of hesitation throws
A dimness on their grand repose,
Assured that love is lord of death.

“He takes his well-beloved son,
He clasps him in one still embrace,
The lad is fair to look upon—
He has his mother’s eyes and face.
And he must slay him! Is it true?
Will he be guiltless of his blood?
And if unstained, what end of good
From such an offering can ensue?”

THE test to which Abraham’s faith was subjected was assuredly the sharpest ever imposed on any man, while the deportment he evinced under it has fairly earned him the distinction, “the father of the faithful.” The whole transaction is recorded by Moses in Genesis xxii. There we learn that “God tempted

Abraham." The term has two significations, viz., "solicitation to sin," and the "trial of character for one's moral development." We have no difficulty in deciding in which of these senses "God tempted Abraham." In the former sense, He tempts no man, *i. e.*, solicits none to sin; in the latter sense, He tempted or tried Abraham. Why did God tempt or try Abraham? is a question which naturally arises. Was it that He might know what was in Abraham? or needed to gauge the depth of his devotedness? Nay, but for the development and strengthening of his faith, and that the Church through future ages might have a standing memorial of what great things faith could attempt; what precious things faith could surrender, and what painful things faith could go through, "that we might become the children of Abraham by faith," leaving all we love behind, facing all we fear before, for the sole reason that God commands us. We behold in Abraham, faith's severest test, and grandest illustration.

THE FAITH OF ABRAHAM, THE TRIED.

I. *In Abraham we have the severest trial of faith.*

1. *If we consider the painful circumstances under which it was tried.*

It is said that "after these things did God tempt Abraham." What things? The words are most pregnant with meaning. It was after patiently waiting twenty-five years for the fulfilment of the Divine promise; after having actually received the fulfil-

ment of that promise ; after having parted with one whom he passionately loved ; after the other son had attained mature age, and become the object of absorbing affection ; after having entered into treaties of amity with the neighboring chiefs, seeming to enjoy peace with the Philistines, peace with God, and probably thinking all his trials over, and looking intently forward for admission into the promised rest. It was “after all these things” that the greatest of his trials came. When his hopes are highest they are suddenly overthrown, and tumble down as by a breath from Heaven. There might have been a time when he would have willingly foregone the promised Isaac in favor of the present Ishmael ; but now, after having enjoyed twenty-five years of Isaac’s life—the pleasantest epoch in his life—to have *him* suddenly demanded for a burnt-offering ; this was intensifying the furnace of affliction with sevenfold heat. What fiery trial could have been as hot ? The spirit of man may sink under any great or protracted affliction, but the effect is incalculably worse when, after seeming to have recovered well, he finds himself thrown back again by an unexpected relapse. “The want of any blessing, however much desired, may be borne at least without pain, but when we first wait for it till the soul almost faints under hope long deferred ; when we then possess it, exult in the enjoyment of it, and taste the pleasures we had otherwise known ; and when, after this, it is to be given up, and we are to go back again to our former state of entire destitution, then it is that the

mind experiences the pangs of hopeless and complicated calamity.”*

2. *If we consider the nature of the offering he was called to surrender.*

(A.) *It was to sacrifice his only son.*

Abraham was tried both as father and saint. We have no trial parallel to it. His *love* was tried, inasmuch as Isaac was his only son; his *faith* was also put to the severest test, inasmuch as Isaac was the “son of promise.” There was a double test, so to speak, in this trial. The first being to sacrifice his only son, and the son of his old age, whom he must have passionately loved. One who was the joy of his heart—yea, whose name was joy itself. It was, indeed, a fiery trial. The manner in which the command was given must have struck deeper and deeper into the sensibilities of the heart. “Take thy son, thine only son, thine only son Isaac, thine only son Isaac whom thou lovest.” The narrative does not portray the patriarch’s feelings on this occasion. Facts simply are related. But is it to be supposed that there was no inward struggle? a father like Abraham not feel keenly the smart? Surely, the words must have fallen like molten lead on his heart. “Take now thine only son Isaac, whom thou lovest, and get thee into the land of Moriah, and offer him there for a burnt-offering upon one of the mountains which I will tell thee of.” (Gen. xxii. 2).

* See Binney’s “Practical Power of Faith.” Page 181.

Ishmael, his other beloved son from Hagar, the bondwoman, is gone. Now, the only one left is demanded as a burnt-offering. Strange immolation! To slay an only son! How does our illustrious saint act? Does he manifest any doubt or hesitancy? Nay! In the dim light of the early morning we behold the mournful procession. Abraham, and two of his servants, with Isaac, direct their steps to the land of Moriah, where Jehovah commands him to go. After a journey of two days, we come to the closing scene of the drama, where the uplifted knife gleams for one terrible moment over the head of its innocent victim, and the fatal blow would have been inflicted, had not the angelic voice restrained the deed. The pointed blade, flashing with destruction, would have been buried in the heart of his only and endeared child, but for the paralyzing effect of that voice from Heaven. I can imagine, when Abraham heard his name twice repeated, his arm dropped powerless, the victim was spared, and his severely tried faith nobly rewarded. The offering was virtually made. So far as intention, and obedience, and feeling were concerned, it was complete. Jehovah, being fully satisfied with Abraham's conduct, interposes, and returns his son to his bursting and bleeding heart, with the gracious repetition of the promise He had previously made. (Genesis xxii. 15-18). God tries His people still, though perhaps not precisely in the same way as He tried Abraham. We are not called upon to slay in bloody sacrifice our attached Isaacs, or those who are dear to us by nature's tie. He has

expressed Himself thoroughly satisfied in the sacrifice of His only begotten Son, Jesus Christ.

Yet we must remember, when by the dispensation of death He commands us to deliver up the objects of our strongest love, we are expected to obey promptly and un murmuringly. Not curse Him as some have done, but bless Him, knowing that "He doeth all things well." He does not expect us to relinquish our loved ones without deep emotion—that would be unnatural for us to do, and unlike God to expect. He who has implanted those tender sensibilities within us, does not demand that we should surrender them without the deepest emotion, but he expects us to do so without a murmur. We may sorrow, but in the midst of that sorrow there must be humble submission. We must know that faith that shall enable us heartily to exclaim, "The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord."

3. *It was to sacrifice the son of promise.*

When Abraham was obliged to part from Ishmael, his son from the bondwoman, he had merely to send him away. Moreover, God graciously condescends to assign his reason for such a course, viz.: that he was not the son of promise. "Not in him, but in Isaac, shall thy seed be called." But now he is commanded, not simply to send Isaac away, but to sacrifice him. He is not to see him sicken and die, but in the ripeness of his ruddy health, he is himself to strike the fatal blow. God does not choose to assign any reason for such a command. Now, if Isaac,

“the son of promise,” be slain, where is the hope of a numerous and distinguished progeny? In him all the families of the earth were to be blessed. From his loins the Saviour of the world was to descend, and yet he must be sacrificed. Is it possible for faith not to stagger before such seeming incongruity? Does not the promise and the command appear a flat contradiction? Has Abraham faith enough to comprehend all this? Has his faith strength and courage enough to endure it all? We may judge by the course he pursues. Without the slightest hesitation he proceeds to the spot, with the determined resolve of obeying the Divine instructions. The colloquy between father and son is most pathetic. “My father,” says the lad of loving sensibilities. “Here am I, my son,” responds the trembling lips of a fond and distressed father. “Behold the fire and the wood, but where is the lamb for a burnt-offering?” replies the son, little knowing that he was the designed lamb. “My son,” says the father, “God will provide Himself a lamb for a burnt-offering.” So on they journey together till they reach the appointed place. The sequel is well known. The altar is built, the wood laid in order, the only son bound, and laid upon the altar, the father’s knife is uplifted, ready for its work of destruction. What accounts for such heroism? The secret is explained in the text by a syllable of five letters, “faith.” Nothing is impossible to him who believes, for faith is not simply the assent of the understanding, but the exercise of an unbounded trust in God, who is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble.

II. *In Abraham we have the grandest example of faith.*

Accounting that God was able to raise him up, even from the dead, *i. e.*, he believed that in case Isaac should be sacrificed as a burnt-offering that "God could raise him up even from the dead." It required more than ordinary faith to believe this. It was an unbounded expression of confidence in God. He who gave Abraham his Isaac, when human probability was utterly opposed to such a phenomenon, was equally able to restore Isaac to life again, after having been slain. This the patriarch thoroughly believed. His confidence rested on one solid pedestal—none less than God Himself. He accounted none other able. His heart believed God was able, for his eye was fixed on Him as the God of resurrection power. Abraham had every reason to conclude that God could raise Isaac, for He had already done what was equivalent to it. He had done this *εν παραβολη*, *i. e.*, in a parable, so that Isaac, being raised from the dead, might be compared with his being born from her who was dead to the power of procreation. Abraham was convinced that there was no limit to Divine power. He believed that what God did against all human probability in Isaac's creation and birth, He was yet able to do in the restoration and resurrection of Isaac. Moreover, Abraham at this juncture saw by the eye of faith the day of Christ. He saw Him who was prefigured by Isaac—saw Him raised from the Arimathean sepulchre by that same Almighty power as was able to raise Isaac. That same power in the last great day will quicken our mortal

bodies. Oh, for an Abrahamic faith in the God of the resurrection! Let us as humble children learn from this "father in faith." Let us as loyal subjects bow in submission to this king in faith, and pray to be governed by the same heroic principle. May we know that faith, which admits no doubt, and which prompts to cheerful obedience to the Divine will, whatever that will might be. May we possess that faith that can stand the test of the hottest trial, and come out unsinged. The more Abraham's faith was tried, the more resplendently it shone, and when it was put to its sharpest test, and reached its culmination, then the angel of the Lord interposes. The struggle is over, the mystery solved. "The ram caught in the thicket" is the fulfilment of Abraham's unconscious prophecy. "My son, God will provide Himself a lamb for a burnt offering."

Let us learn in conclusion :

1. *That faith in God can stand the test of the severest nature.*
2. *That faith in God sees nothing too much to do in obedience to Him.*
3. *That faith in God knows that there is nothing impossible unto God.*
4. *That faith in God introduces us into Abraham's family and privileges.*

CHAPTER X.

HEB. XI. 20.

20 By faith Isaac blessed Jacob and Esau concerning things to come.

WHATEVER may have been Isaac's defects, he was as truly a child of Abraham by faith as he was his son according to the flesh. While the image of his saintly father was discernible in his countenance, the image of his father's God was stamped in his soul. He was Abraham's noblest son and Heaven's saintliest favorite. He is embraced in that glorious trio who are represented as God's in a peculiar sense — "the God of Abraham, and of Isaac, and of Jacob." In order to ascertain wherein the faith of Isaac consisted, it is necessary to refer to Genesis xxvii. 27-40. In those verses he foretells the future condition of his sons. His physical vision had become dimmed, yet by the eye of faith he could peer into the distant future, and bless both his sons accordingly. Though practised deception upon by Rebekah and Jacob, yet it did not interfere with the prophetic character of his faith. His faith was as solid as it was sublime, and the base deception of mother and son was overruled by an inscrutable Providence to the execution of the Divine purposes.

THE FAITH OF ISAAC.

I. *In its parental relationship.*

"By faith Isaac blessed Jacob and Esau." These men were twin brothers. Esau, the firstborn, is de-

scribed as being "red all over, like an hairy garment." Jacob, the youngest, is represented as having his hand on Esau's heel when following him into the world. The first was a "cunning hunter," the latter "a plain man, dwelling in tents." Both were well developed children. They had expressive brows and manly forms. One thing, however, marred the domestic peace of the parents, viz., the invidious distinctions they made between their sons. Esau was his father's favorite; Jacob, his mother's. "Isaac loved Esau, because he did eat of his venison." What a selfish reason! having its seat in the stomach. Surely human nature is weak. The pandering to one's appetites has much to do in the present day with partialities and distinctions. "But Rebekah loved Jacob." She assigns no reason for her preference, nor does the Scripture assign any reason. Perhaps Jacob flattered her more than Esau did, and that her vanity was the cause of it. The indiscretion of this aged couple proved the source of much unpleasantness. It doubtless plunged them into many a family broil.

It would be well for parents to avoid the folly of creating distinctions in their families, if they would keep away the serpent of jealousy. Children should all have the impression that they are equally regarded. As might have been expected, the partiality respectively shown by Isaac and Rebekah created discord and distress between the entire family. Esau must have felt elated to know that he was his father's choice, and Isaac must have felt equally elated to

know that he was his mother's pet. Soon the folly of the parents developed itself in the lives of their offspring. Jacob proved himself to be a trinity of the foulest crimes—a liar, deceiver, and thief. He took advantage of his brother's weakness, when he was faint and hungry, just returned from his hunting expedition. He bribed him to sell his birthright for a mess of pottage, thereby evincing the spirit of the Evil One, who tempted our first parents to sin by eating the fruit of the forbidden tree. He also lied unto his blind father, as well as defrauded Esau of his blessing. This was the blackest day in Jacob's life, and the foulest blot in his character. Esau, too, acted most contemptibly. By his impatience and appetite, he committed the detestable act of selling, for a mess of pottage, the most valuable privilege he possessed, even his birthright, which gave him every senior advantage.

Alas! we have the descendants of these brothers still—Jacobs in chicanery, and bribery, and deception, and Esaus in rashness, and greed, and madness. There are thousands to-day who barter their soul's eternal interest, for the mere gratification of their animal passions. For "the pleasures of sin for a season," they sell their birthright of everlasting dignity—pleasures that are a mere mess of pottage. Esau, who had the right of primogeniture, and Jacob, who was the son of promise, though natural brothers, never became true friends after this discreditable transaction. Esau was heartbroken at the reflection of his forfeited blessing. "He lifted up his voice

and wept." It was the bitterest trial of his life. Never was a meal so dearly bought as this broth bought by Esau. He would have perpetrated the crime of fratricide, in the excitement of the moment, had it not been his regard for the feelings of his aged father, for "Esau said in his heart, the days of mourning for my father are at hand, then will I slay my brother Jacob"—an oriental fashion in speaking of one's death. Through the interposition of an all-wise and overruling Providence, this murderous purpose was not executed. Nor did Jacob escape the penalty of his wrongdoing. He was chastened sorely by his Heavenly Father. He had but little comfort through life after the surreptitious manner in which he obtained his father's blessing. He was murderously hated by his brother Esau; cruelly deceived and harshly treated by his uncle Laban; his dearest wife Rachel dies, and leaves him in an agony of sorrow; he never saw his fond mother after he was sent away to escape Esau's bloody revenge; his own children, the staff of his old age, wound his soul to the very quick; Reuben and Judah become the basest fornicators; Simeon and Levi become traitors and murderers; Joseph is mourned after as one that is dead; Simeon is missed; Benjamin, his idolized child, he trembles for, and is loath to let him go; and, last of all, he is forced by famine in his declining days to visit Egypt, where he knew the people considered it an abomination to eat with men like himself, and there he dies in a strange land. Verily he could mournfully exclaim, "Few and evil have

the days of the years of my life been." None of the patriarchal race suffered as he did. Let us, then, as parents, beware to form absurd distinctions in our families, lest the folly of our conduct develop itself in the unhappy lives of our children and children's children.

II. *In its prophetical character.*

"By faith Isaac blessed Jacob and Esau *concerning things to come.*" What were those things? They refer to the blessings specified in Genesis xxvii. 27-29, also the thirty-ninth and fortieth verses of the same chapter. To Jacob, who personated Esau, but who nevertheless was the son of promise, he said, "Come near now, and kiss me, my son. * * * See, the smell of my son is as the smell of a field which the Lord hath blessed: therefore God give thee of the dew of heaven, and the fatness of the earth, and plenty of corn and wine: let people serve thee, and nations bow down to thee: be lord over thy brethren, and let thy mother's sons bow down to thee: cursed be every one that curseth thee, and blessed be he that blesseth thee." To Esau he said, "Behold, thy dwelling shall be the fatness of the earth, and of the dew of heaven from above; and by thy sword shalt thou live, and shalt serve thy brother; and it shall come to pass when thou shalt have the dominion, that thou shalt break his yoke from off thy neck." These divers blessings were literally conferred. Isaac felt perfectly persuaded that Jehovah would verify all that he had predicted. It was under this convic-

tion that he was moved to pronounce these respective prophetic blessings. Each of his sons was immensely rich, and fully answered the descriptive blessings foretold by him. Esau, the founder of the Edomitish nation, lived by the sword, and "had more riches than he and his family could well manage, while Jacob, on the other hand, followed his agricultural pursuits, and was abundantly prosperous. Isaac speaks under the guidance of faith, as though the treasures of the world were at his disposal.* True, he was about to make a grievous mistake—even of moving contrary to the counsel of God; still he knew God, and took His place accordingly, dispensing blessings in all the dignity and power of faith. "I have blessed him: yea, and he shall be blessed." "With corn and wine have I sustained him." It is the province of faith to rise above one's own failings and its effects, into the place God would have us to occupy.

With all Esau's complaints, who had voluntarily abdicated his birthright, Isaac would not, could not recall the blessing conferred on Jacob. "Isaac would unjustly bestow on Esau that which was Jacob's. Rebekah, with equal injustice, teaches Jacob to personate Esau. The mother, who should have trusted the whole matter in the hands of God, cheats her firstborn, and beguiles her husband, rather than the father shall beguile the chosen son of his blessing. Her desire was good; the means employed to accom-

* C. H. M. on Genesis, page 266.

plish it were unlawful. God often accomplishes His purposes by means of our infirmity; yet neither is our weakness justified nor His unerring justice impeached.*

Isaac's faith was firm, though he himself was imposed upon. He felt confident that all was right. When blessing his sons, he had faith enough to believe that God would verify those blessings. Having trusted in God so long, he would not mistrust Him on this occasion. His faith in God's promises was his support through youth and manhood, and now in the decrepitude of old age he was not going to make a shipwreck of it.

This is the spirit which should characterize all parents. They should exercise unhesitating confidence in God, that he can exceed their highest desires. Believing God to be the hearer of prayer, let us cry to Him in faith. We, too, may bless our children. We may do it effectually by presenting them to God in the exercise of prayer. He never treats with silent contempt the petitions of those who put their trust in Him.

Parents! If you would have your children blessed of God, remember to pray for them without ceasing. Let them see that you are in earnest concerning their soul's spiritual welfare. Emulate the example of the patriarchs of old, who prayed earnestly for their progeny. Like the parents who brought their children to the Saviour that He might bless them by his all-

* Bishop Hall's Scripture History, pages 35, 36.

healing touch ; so may we bring our loved ones to the same Saviour, that He might touch their hearts by His Holy Spirit, and heal them with the balm of salvation. Oh ! the mighty influence that is exerted by the counsels of a pious father, and the prayers of a sainted mother ! Tens of thousands have been converted by their instrumentality, long after they were committed to their silent tomb. When, like Isaac, we shall be summoned home by the pale messenger, let us not forget to leave our blessing behind to our children ; the blessing of an earnest prayer for their salvation ; the blessing of a holy example for their emulation ; the blessing of a faithful counsel that may sink into their hearts, and be the means of leading them to the God of Abraham, and of Isaac, and of Jacob. These are the best legacies that we can possibly leave behind. They will speak when our lips are sealed in the silence of death.

CHAPTER XI.

HEB. XI. 21.

21 By faith Jacob, when he was a dying, blessed both the sons of Joseph ; and worshipped, leaning upon the top of his staff.

JACOB, though not a perfect man, is represented in this text as one of the celebrities of faith. Several events that transpired in his life entitle him to the first rank of faith's dignitaries. The memorable meeting at Peniel, where an angel wrestled with him until the break of day, is sufficient in itself to entitle him to this distinction.

It is necessary to correct a general misapprehension of the Scripture in Genesis xxxii. 24. Jacob is generally represented as wrestling with the angel, whereas the words teach that the angel wrestled with Jacob. The angel struggles to extricate himself from the grasp of the venerable saint. Seeing he cannot prevail, he resorts to the measure of dis-jointing the patriarch's thigh, saying, "Let me go, for the day breaketh." Heeding not the voice, Jacob grasps him still the more firmly, exclaiming, "I will not let thee go, except thou bless me." What determined faith! Through the innumerable ages shall this hero at the throne of grace be recognized, not as Jacob, but as Israel, "for as a prince had he power with God and with man, and prevailed."

It is only as we are determined to succeed in prayer, even as Jacob did of old, that we may expect

to prevail. It is the fervent prayer which proves an effectual one, and avails much. It is as true now as ever, that the "kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force."

THE FAITH OF JACOB.

I. *As manifested in his dying benediction.*

"By faith he blessed both the sons of Joseph." The account given by the inspired historian is truly touching. Genesis xlviii. 8-22. Having placed his right hand on Ephraim's head, and his left hand on Manasseh's, he thus proceeds, "God," etc. Genesis xlviii. 15, 16. The richest bequest Ephraim and Manasseh could possibly receive was the parting blessing of their sainted grandfather. What an affecting sight! To see the venerable patriarch, on the verge of eternity, blessing his grandsons. Some old people die with a heart withered and dry as leather; all sensibilities gone. Not so Jacob. It is beautiful to see him with his large heart expanding in warmest sympathies for posterity, while his tottering frame trembles beneath the weight of years, and the chilly hand of death upon him, his own personal infirmities lost in the concerns of his race.

In the blessing he pronounces, what an acknowledgment of God's past goodness and unfailing mercy! What a glowing exhibition of faith, when he blesses the sons of Joseph with regard to their future destiny! What emotions of rapture must have electrified the souls of those favored brothers!

When it is said that "by faith he blessed both the sons of Joseph," it is well to remember that he could not distinguish Joseph's sons by sight, but distinguished them by faith. This accounts for the transposition of his hands, when he purposely laid his right hand on Ephraim and his left on Manasseh.

By faith also he conferred his prophetic blessing. The touch of that hand they never forgot. The blessing foretold they literally realized. Believers can do nothing worthier in the article of death, when about to commend their spirit into the hands of an ever keeping covenant God, than to bless those intimately related to them. Who can compute the number of conversions that have occurred through the dying blessing of parents and grandparents? Ah, yes! Many a wayward son and thoughtless daughter has been brought to their parents' God by means of the dying counsel and parting blessing.

Jacob's last exercise was to bless his sons and grandsons. Faith enabled him, in the feebleness and decrepitude of old age, to perform the task. The faith which distinguished him in life did not forsake him in death. It blazed forth an inextinguishable flame, however fiercely the cold winds from the caverns of death blew upon it. It supported him from sinking when the billows of death rolled over him. It illumined the dark valley as he plunged into it, and in its cheery light he was ushered into the nightless and deathless world. What faith did for him, it can do for us.

II. As manifested in his dying posture.

“And worshipped, leaning upon the top of his staff.” There has been some difficulty felt in reference to this part of our text. The historian in Genesis says that “Israel bowed himself upon the bed’s head.” And when Jacob was informed of his son’s visit, it is said that he “strengthened himself and sat upon the bed.” Here in the text it is stated that he “worshipped, leaning upon the top of his staff.” There is nothing conflicting in these different testimonies. When it is said that he “worshipped, leaning upon the top of his staff,” it alludes to his custom for many years. Jacob, whose thigh had been disjoined by the angel, had been obliged for years to have the support of this prop. And it is quite probable that this is a distinct transaction from the other. It cannot be shown, that “leaning upon the top of his staff” accompanied his dying blessing. The seventy translate the words as we have them in our text.

It seems probable, however, that Jacob, who at this time is represented as sitting on the bed, had his old staff with him to lean his feeble hands and wearied head upon. It is not likely he would do without his pilgrim staff. Time had stolen strength from his frame. He was a dying man, shivering upon the border of the grave, and his staff served to support his tottering body. In this attitude he seems to have been when Joseph swore that he would comply with his dying request in regard to his burial. “Lo, I die,” etc. (Genesis l. 5). Joseph’s pledge was so gratifying to him that he instantly

offered praise to God. "He worshipped, leaning upon the top of his staff." The Douay version renders it, "He adored the top of his staff." Jerome and other substantial authorities repudiate such an interpretation. A moment's reflection is sufficient to discover its absurdity. Jacob was no idolater, no worshipper of wood. He worshipped and adored that God whose mercies the old staff brought to memory. He remembered the God of his fathers, and felt mightily the inspiration of reverence, gratitude and praise. His dying breath was spent in praising the God of Heaven.

Of thousands it may yet be said, "They worship God, leaning upon the top of their staff." Their feeble, tottering frames have rendered it necessary to have staff support. Could those staffs speak, how loudly they would ring forth the praises of Jehovah, for the soul support their owners have received from above. What sight so heavenly and affecting on earth as to witness an old pilgrim, with his antiquated staff in hand, dragging along slowly but surely into that "rest which remains for the people of God." I venture to affirm that the grandest sight on earth is to see an old pilgrim spending his last days in the service of his God, and drawing near to the end of his pilgrimage, ripe for immortality.

Some years ago the government was smitten with amazement and admiration when they saw the venerable Thaddeus Stevens come forward when on the brink of the grave, to denounce tyranny and oppression, and defend his country's constitution. An

when he charged the President with high treason, and defended the claims of the Senate, you could see the old fire that formerly flamed in his eyes. It is said that the scene was most affecting—to see the old senator, while on the borders of eternity, spending his last hours to serve his country ; so, also, Thurlow Weed, whom I heard recently, speaking loyal words for his nation. But infinitely more enchanting is it to see an old servant of God, when almost in the valley of the shadow of death, laboring for his Lord, pleading to the last moment the claims of the cross ; persuading men to flee to the refuge that is in Christ Jesus. His head is white with the snows of winter ; his eyes are become dim by the advance of years ; his back bends with the weight of old age ; his face is wrinkled in the service of his Master ; his hands are trembling and his limbs are shaking, as if about to fall in the embrace of death. Yet, with it all, his heart is as warm as ever in its love for the cause, and his desire as intense as ever to dwell in the house of his God all the days of his life.

My dear friends, to be an old pilgrim we must commence to travel heavenward while we are young. Some there are in the Church who are younger in years, but they are older as Christians. My dear brethren, if, like Jacob, you are pilgrims on earth, there awaits for you above the pilgrim's rest. Talk about titles ! Here is a diploma worth receiving—a title eclipsing those of earth's universities. To be an O. P. I heard a fellow student once say

he would like to be a P. P.* Old Huntingdon used to say he couldn't buy a D. D., but preferred being S. S.† The title I covet, my brethren, is O. P. (old pilgrim), like Jacob, or O. D. (old disciple), like Mnason. The glittering titles of earth are contemptible in comparison with them.

“Heavenward! our path still goes,
Sojourners on earth we wander,
Till we reach our blest repose
In the Land of Promise yonder.
Here we must stay a pilgrim band,
There must be our fatherland!

“Heavenward! my soul, arise,
For thou art a Heavenly being;
Thou should'st seek no earthly prize
When from this world thou art fleeing.
Hearts with Heavenly wisdom blest
Can in Heaven alone find rest.

“Heavenward! Death's mighty hand
Guides me there to joy and gladness;
There within that blessed land,
Victor over pain and sadness,
Christ himself has gone before;
Can I dread an unknown shore?

“Heavenward! oh Heavenward!
There shall be our lot and treasure—
Let me strive my heart to guard
From each vain and worldly pleasure.
Heavenward! my thoughts must tend,
Till in Heaven my cares shall end.”

* Popular preacher.

† Sinner saved.

CHAPTER XII.

HEB. XI. 22.

22 By faith Joseph, when he died, made mention of the departing of the children of Israel; and gave commandment concerning his bones.

THE narrative which contains the history of Joseph is one of the most exquisite and pathetic in the whole inspired volume. Every portion of it is fraught with profoundest interest, and cannot fail to electrify us in its thoughtful perusal. That our subject was a hero in faith, none will dare dispute. He completely filled the glowing prophetic representation made by his father. "Joseph is a fruitful bough, even a fruitful bough by a well; whose branches run over the wall: the archers have sorely grieved him, and shot at him, and hated him: but his bow abode in strength, and the arms of his hands were made strong by the hands of the mighty God of Jacob; (from thence is the shepherd, the stone of Israel:) even by the God of thy father, who shall help thee; and by the Almighty, who shall bless thee with blessings from above, blessings of the deep that lie under, blessings of the breasts, and of the womb: the blessings of thy father have prevailed above the blessings of my progenitors unto the utmost bound of the everlasting hills: they shall be on the head of Joseph, and on the crown of the head of him that was separate from his brethren." God over-

ruled for good all the trials of Joseph. What were intended as curses were transmuted into blessings. They co-operated for good in the temporal and spiritual welfare of Joseph.

THE FAITH OF JOSEPH.

I. *In its relation to the exodus of his brethren.*

It was by faith that he foretold this extraordinary circumstance. "And Joseph said unto his brethren, I die : and God will surely visit you, and bring you out of this land unto the land which he sware to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob." They were now in Egypt, well provided for, yet Canaan was their destination. Joseph firmly believed that God, who had promised his forefathers the land of Canaan for their inheritance, would eventually lead his people into the promised land. He who brought them by so remarkable a providence into Egypt would lead them therefrom into Canaan. This providential sojourn naturally recalls the earlier part of Joseph's eventful life. He had spent about two thirds of his days in Egypt. The direct cause of this was the hatred and envy of his brethren ; the indirect cause, his significant dreams ; the overruling cause, the providence of God. In consequence of his agricultural and astronomical dreams, they hated him with the hatred of assassins. Espying him in the distance on the road that leads from Shechem to Dotham, they conspire to kill him. The fratricidal suggestion of the majority of his bloodthirsty kinsmen is to slay him, cast him into a pit, and then

fabricate a false representation to their father. Reuben, with more humanity about him than the rest of his brethren, suggests a milder treatment: that he be simply cast into a pit, in the hope "that he might rid him out of their hands, and deliver him again to his father." Soon they meet a company of Ishmaelites from Gilead, with their laden camels, on their way to Egypt, when Judah suggests that he be sold unto them. He prefers to act the part of Judas Iscariot, who sold his Lord for thirty pieces of silver, than the part of the Roman soldier who pierced the Lord. To this infamous proposal they unanimously agree. Midian merchants lift Joseph out of the pit, and he is sold to the Ishmaelites for twenty pieces, or shekels of silver, or less than thirteen dollars. Barbarous bargain! selling their own brother for less than thirteen dollars! But, O my soul! a still greater marvel, to sell Jesus, our elder brother, who is the antitype of Joseph, for only three dollars more! Joseph being thus sold and taken as a slave into Egypt, Reuben returns distractedly to the pit, and remorsefully cries, "The child is not: and I, whither shall I go?" Conscience ever condemns us when we perpetrate wrong. Joseph is subsequently sold to a distinguished officer in Pharaoh's court, whose name is Potiphar. Appreciating the slave's moral worth, he appoints him lord chamberlain, or "overseer over his house." All that Potiphar had he put under his charge. Nor was his confidence misplaced, or his trust betrayed. Everything flourished under Joseph's care. The sorest trial soon

confronts him. It springs from a source he least suspected. Intense, however, as is the temptation, he bravely resists it, and magnanimously replies, "Behold, my master knoweth not what is with me in the house, and he hath committed all that he hath into my hands; there is none greater in this house than I, neither hath he kept back anything from me, but thee, because thou art his wife: how then can I do this wickedness, and sin against God?" Yet, notwithstanding his gentle remonstrance, this infamous woman devises a most villanous falsehood, by which the innocent one is unceremoniously thrust into prison.

"'Twas slander filled her mouth with lying words,
Slander, the foulest whelp of sin."

Alas! to fall into the clutches of such a woman. Well may we pray, "From the tongue of female slander, good Lord, deliver us." Spenser, in his "Faëry Queen," writes thus of the slanderous woman:

"Her face was ugly, and her mouth distort
Foaming with poison round about her gills,
In which her cursed tongue full sharp and short
Appeared like asp, his sting that closely kills,
Or cruelly does wound whomso she wills."

Jehovah, however, was with Joseph, even in the dungeon. With the King of kings for companion, prison becomes a palace. "With Christ in the vessel, we may smile at the storm." Through Divine interposition, our sublime youth was promoted in prison. He was made superintendent, or chief warden, of all the incarcerated. By the same overruling

Providence he was released. Pharaoh was troubled by his dreams, and on account of their interpretation by Joseph he was appointed Governor over the Egyptian domains. Though but thirty years of age, he filled his exalted position with distinction and success. Prosperity attended all his plans and purposes. All his movements were in the right direction.

What a grand model for young men! Where piety reigns, it will come out of pit, prison and palace uncorrupted. Nor will it degenerate in its exaltation to earthly thrones and powers. Our beloved Garfield was a noble illustration of this, as was Joseph in Egypt, and Daniel in Babylon. Let us remember the words of the royal sage, "Exalt her, and she shall promote thee." Next, we have Joseph's prophetic dreams substantiated. The eleven sheaves are obliged to bow to his sheaf. The famine has overtaken them, and Jacob with his sons must travel to Egypt to buy corn or perish. One can scarcely read what follows without a melting heart and tearful eye. Oh, the tender love of a deserted brother! Oh, the completeness of a brother's forgiveness! Oh, the generosity of an illtreated brother! It is a spectacle worthy of an angel's attention! In after years, the Governor pays his aged parent a visit, accompanied by his two sons Manasseh and Ephraim. Soon after the visit, the venerable father dies, and is buried by the hands of filial devotion in the cave of Machpelah. Joseph then returns to his official duties in Egypt, where he spends the remnant of his days. At the time of his death, he attained the age of one

hundred and ten years. He thus lived in Egypt between eighty and ninety years, being eighty years by Pharaoh's appointment the Prime Minister or Governor of Egypt. But the time has arrived when he too must die. Though nigh unto death, the immortal principle that burns within his breast enables him to speak with confidence concerning the departure of the children of Israel, and he feels certain that his prediction will come to pass.

II. *In its relation to the burial of his body.*

"He gave commandment concerning his bones." This is another illustrious exhibition of his faith. He is confident that his deceased body will be conveyed from Egypt. Though he has spent the greater part of his life there, and knows that he will die there, yea, be "put in a coffin there," he is fully persuaded that he will not be interred there. Sustained by this "full assurance of faith," he gives commandment concerning his bones. "And Joseph took an oath of the children of Israel, saying, God will surely visit you, and ye shall carry up my bones from hence." Genesis l. 25. His faith is immovably fixed in the God of his fathers, and he is confident that his mortal remains will be borne to the land of his fathers. His instructions were obeyed, his prediction verified. In Joshua xxiv. 32, we read, "And the bones of Joseph, which the children of Israel brought up out of Egypt, buried they in Shechem, in a parcel of ground which Jacob bought of the sons of Hamor the father of Shechem for an hundred pieces of silver."

Perhaps the events referred to in our text may not appear particularly interesting in themselves ; yet they are of special interest as they set forth the principle which has made his name and fame imperishable. He was was a large hearted saint of deep rooted faith. That faith gloriously recompensed him even in this life, and triumphantly bore him to the pinnacle of celestial honor and blessedness. "How did he know that his people would ever quit Egypt?" We reply, by faith ; not faith in a written word, for Joseph had no Bible ; rather, faith in that conviction of his own heart, which is itself the substantial evidence of faith. For religious faith ever dreams of something higher, more beautiful, more perfect, than the state of things with which it feels surrounded. Ever, a day future lies before it, the evidence for which is its own hope. Abraham, by that creative faith, saw the day of Christ, and was glad. Joseph saw his family in prosperity, even in affluence, but he felt that this was not their rest. A higher life than that of affluence ; a nobler destiny than that of stagnant rest, there must be for them in the future, else all the anticipations of a purer earth and a holier world, which imagination bodied forth within his soul, were empty dreams, not the intuitions of God's Spirit. It was this idea of perfection, which was the substance of things hoped for, that carried him far beyond the period of his own death, and made him feel himself a partaker of his nation's blessed future. And that is the evidence of immortality. When the coffin is lowered into the grave,

and the dull, heavy sound of earth falling on it is heard, there are some to whom that sound seems but the echo of their worst anticipations; seems but to reverberate the idea of decay forever in the words, "Earth to earth, ashes to ashes, dust to dust." There are others to whom it sounds pregnant with the expectation of immortality, the sure and certain hope of a resurrection to eternal life. The difference between these two feelings is measured by the difference of lives. They whose life is low and earthly, how can they believe in aught beyond the grave, when nothing of that life which is eternal has yet stirred within them? They who have lived as Joseph lived, just in proportion to their purity and unselfishness, must believe it. They cannot but believe it. The eternal existence is already pulsing in their veins, the life of trust and high hope, and sublime longings after perfection, with which the decay of the frame has nothing at all to do. That is gone, yes; but it was not that life in which they lived, and when it finished, what had that ruin to do with the destruction of the immortal? For what is our proof of immortality? * * * The life of the spirit is the evidence. Heaven begun is the living proof that makes the Heaven to come credible—Christ in you the hope of glory. It is the eagle eye of faith which penetrates the grave, and sees far into the tranquil things of death. He alone can believe in immortality who feels the resurrection in him already."*

* See Robertson's sermon on Genesis l. 24-60.

He who died in Egypt, knew that he would be buried in Canaan, and that he would rise in immortal glory before the throne. I care not where I am buried. I have no scruples as to my resting place. Nor am I ambitious for a costly monument over my mound. All I ask is, "Let me live the life of the righteous, that my latter end may be like his."

CHAPTER XIII.

HEB. XI. 23.

23 By faith Moses, when he was born, was hid three months of his parents, because they saw he was a proper child; and they were not afraid of the king's commandments.

THE name of Moses is a household word. He was remarkable in his birth, life, death and burial. From infancy to manhood, what a life of eventful history! In the words of our text, the faith of Moses' parents is pointed out. It was this principle which fearlessly led them to conceal their child in the ark of bulrushes, feeling certain that Heaven would interpose. It is the first case of concealment of birth we have any record of, but one that was sanctioned by the Supreme Court of the Universe. It was not blind chance that conveyed Moses to the banks of the Nile, nor led the Princess of Egypt for her morning's bath just in time to save the infant. Divine providence was in the movement, and in that providence Amram and Jochebed trusted.

THE FAITH OF MOSES' PARENTS.

There are two elements combined in these parents' faith.

I. *Confidence in Divine interposition.*

Amram and Jochebed are illustrious names—names enrolled in the registry of Heaven. Both were linked to Jehovah by faith. It was this faith that

guided them in every step. It was an enterprising faith. It made them fearless of Pharaoh's commandment, and led them to hide their infant son three months, for he was such a "proper" or beautiful child. In Exodus ii. 2, it is written, "he was a goodly child," *i. e.*, he was peculiarly attractive. He surpassed all other children in beauty of expression. Jehovah had a special purpose in view when he formed this noblest specimen of infantine comeliness, as the sequel will demonstrate. As a rule, every mother thinks her own child to be the sweetest little creature, whether it be so or not; but in this instance it is no hyperbole to declare that the child Moses was truly handsomer than other children. Had there been such an institution as the baby show in those days, and he taken into them, I have not the slightest doubt that the prize and certificate would be awarded to Amram and his wife for the handsomest specimen.

At last the trial has come! This babe of matchless beauty must be shifted from his present quarters. The rippling smile of that dimpled cheek, and the brightsome twinkle of those laughing eyes of unrivalled fascination, which had struck their penetrating force into the parents' hearts, must now be dispensed with. They can enjoy the company of their little cherub no more. They can hide him no longer. In fact, he will not be hid. He *will* be seen and heard. That tiny frame has gathered strength, and consequently that music peculiar to babes has attained a louder volume of sound than formerly. They cannot, therefore, retain him any more without imperilling

his life, and risking their own. The detectives would discover them, and then the terrible consequences—the slaughter of their child, and perhaps the imprisonment of themselves. The parents, early one morning, meet for consultation and prayer. They had suffered a very uneasy, anxious time the night previous. Oh! how they trembled in their bed lest the shrieking sound of that piercing little cry might reverberate outside, and thus involve them all in trouble. Finally, they agree to put the child out, not to be nursed, unless the gentle zephyr acts the kind mother by its plaintive wail, or the rustling bulrushes sing their lullaby over him. They construct an ark or cradle of bulrushes—faith's patent bascinet! There they place their precious little idol, beside the river's brink in the flags or tall grass. Will that little basket boat with its valued freight prove to be the infant's coffin? Or will he be devoured by voracious crocodiles which infest the Nile? It is an anxious, exciting crisis! The parents feel that their child is placed in a convenient spot. They had faith in God, that He would eventually provide a way of escape. They indulge the hope that some sympathetic friend, having influence with the barbarous monarch, might see the child, and thus be smitten with his beauty, and rescue him from danger. In this happy assurance they deposit him among the flags by the Nile. Nor was their faith in vain. The savior of their child is at hand. Who happens first to come along but Pharaoh's daughter. Hark! what means this sound? I hear a babe's cries. She approaches the ark, and,

opening it, discovers the "goodly child." O sweet countenance! O thrilling music! The royal heart melts with loving tenderness at the touching sight. She falls in love with the little innocent, and wants to become his adopted mother. He is adopted by the daughter of the very king who cruelly decreed that all the Hebrew male children should be slain.

"With what compassion—angelic sweetness,
She bends to look upon the infant's face.
She takes his little hand in hers—he wakes;
She smiles upon him. Hark! alas, he cries.
Weep on, sweet babe; weep on, till thou hast touched
Each chord of pity, wakened every sense
Of melting sympathy, and stol'n her soul."

Then comes the thrilling sequel. Miriam, Moses' thirteen year old sister, intimates to Miss Pharaoh that she knew of a woman who would be willing to nurse him for her. Little suspected Thermuthis that Miriam had her own mother in mind. Nothing was ever more romantic than this skilfully laid scheme. Miriam's suggestion being approved, she hastens to her anxious mother with the delightful orders. She receives her own child back again, and although she nurses him for Pharaoh's daughter, she secretly enjoys the pleasure. "Take this child away and nurse it for me, and I will give thee thy wages." Little knew the royal princess that the luxury of nursing her own child was all the wages she desired. Thus the faith of Moses' parents was nobly rewarded. Confidence in God insured unmistakable success. None who exercises such confidence shall ever be put to confusion.

II. *Fearlessness of human menace.*

The parents of Moses realized the sentiments of the Psalmist. "Because thou hast been my help, therefore under the shadow of thy wings will I rejoice. I will not fear what man can do unto me, for Jehovah is my strength and redeemer."

The first edict of the cold blooded tyrant was, that the Hebrew midwives should be the executioners of Hebrew boys. This, however, was a vain requisition. The Hebrew women were not made of the stuff Pharaoh expected. They would die themselves, before they would stain their hands with the innocent blood of their Hebrew baby boys. The first edict failing, the devil suggests to his hellish mind another plan. "And Pharaoh charged all the people, saying, Every son that is born ye shall cast into the river, and every daughter ye shall save alive." This damnable edict was successful. Enraged Egyptians, who hated the Hebrew race, hastened to their dwellings, and snatching the children from their mothers' sheltering bosoms, threw them into the cruel tide. Oh, sickening sight! Angels must have wept when they beheld hundreds of these dear helpless little ones borne away by the current to the jaws of crocodiles, or to become food for fish in the dread depths of the distant Mediterranean, or when they heard the piteous wails of these precious children, the frantic shrieks of heartbroken mothers, and the awful groans of agonized fathers. We wonder sometimes how such monsters were allowed to live. Shortly after the brutal edict was issued, Moses was born, as though determined to come in

spite of the edict. When the mother heard that her newly born was a son, I imagine how saddened she felt. Must he too be torn from her, and cast into the dreadful Nile? It shall not be. So the parents managed with peculiar adroitness to secrete him for three months. At the expiration of that term, there was danger brewing. They cannot keep him one day longer. Moved by faith, they prepare an ark of bulrushes, daub it with pitch and slime, place the child in it, and lay it in the flags by the river's brink. Miriam, with beating heart, anxiously watches. She wonders whether any carnivorous creature in the river will swim to the brink, and crawl to the spot where her little brother lies. She prays that such might not be the case. Fortunately, the first creature that detects the ark and its occupant is a royal, noble hearted maid, even the king's daughter Thermuthis, whose name will ever stand high in the records of eternity as the humane deliverer of him who proved to be one of the most illustrious heroes and saints. Though brought up in idolatry, we cannot but hope that she embraced the God of her adopted son. "Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy." We read of Pharaoh's wickedness and cruelty, but we have nothing discreditable in the afterconduct of his daughter. This single act of hers entitles her to universal admiration. God employed her to give his servant Moses the best education in the land.

And what more can we say of these parents' faith? Only that it was firm. It enabled them to remain

imperturbable. Had it not been for such faith they would have always been in a state of nervous excitement. The threatening edict of Pharaoh might have so terrified them as to implicate them, and the consequence would be the destruction of their little one, and perhaps of their own lives. Their faith, however, was of the right stamp. It sustained them unfalteringly. It gloriously triumphed.

Parents! there is a power even more malignant than Pharaoh's that seeks the ruin of your children. "Your adversary, the devil, goeth about as a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour." Every opportunity he sees to snatch your children from your influence, under his soul destructive sway, he will embrace. He lays all manner of baits to entrap them. See to it that you train them up aright. Bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. Nurse them for God, and you shall receive your wages in the conversion of your children, in the consciousness of fulfilled parental duty, and in the commendation of your Lord, "Well done, thou good and faithful servant: thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things; enter thou into the joy of thy Lord."

CHAPTER XIV.

HEB. XI. 24-29.

24 By faith Moses, when he was come to years, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter ;

25 Choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season ;

26 Esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt: for he had respect unto the recompense of the reward.

27 By faith he forsook Egypt, not fearing the wrath of the king : for he endured, as seeing him who is invisible.

28 Through faith he kept the passover, and the sprinkling of blood, lest he that destroyed the firstborn should touch them.

29 By faith they passed through the Red Sea as by dry land : which the Egyptians assaying to do were drowned.

WE cannot thoughtfully read the history of this remarkable character without gathering several valuable instructions. The hand of Providence is clearly seen from his cradle to his grave. As in his birth he was hid from the enemy three months, so in his burial no man was allowed to dig or see his grave, and "no man knoweth of his grave to this day."

"With unabated natural force,
His life's rich day no evening knows,
But like an Eastern sunset sinks
At once into the night's repose.
No twilight deepening into night,
No slow decay of ripening power ;
Full-orbed he melts from Israel's sight,
And in the splendor of full flower.

“Like one who, having gained the day,
From the dim field of battle goes
To meet the herald of his king,
While everywhere the trumpet blows :
So Israel's captain climbs the mount,
With Canaan's hills before his eyes,
Brave-hearted goes to meet with death,
And then in solemn silence dies.

“Dies there alone, like the great sun,
And wrapt in no Egyptian balms,
But folded into dreamless sleep,
Clasped in the everlasting arms.
So rest, fair form and kingly brow,
In thy great God-built sepulchre ;
The thunders are thy requiem,
And stars the only watchers there.”

It was the spirit of this saint, with that of Elijah's, that was honored by accompanying Jesus Christ to the Mount of Transfiguration, when Peter, in his enthusiasm and ecstasy, desired to erect them each a tabernacle.

The blessedness of the heavenly state is represented by the singing of “the song of Moses and of the Lamb.” The incidents of his life are of the most dramatic nature. How he grew up to be learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians, “mighty in words and deeds.” How, when he arrived at mature age, “he refused to become the son of Pharaoh's daughter ;” how he retired alone into the mountains and into the desert for holy communion and Divine counsel ; how the Lord appeared to him in the flaming, yet unconsumed bush ; how he was trained by the discipline of solitude. Then we find

him returning to Pharaoh's court, and shortly after we see him by the shores of the Red Sea, through which he passes as on dry land. Reaching the other side in safety, we behold him as leader, lawgiver, judge, prophet, and king of the people. Forty years he led that people through the wilderness, into the land promised by Jehovah, and just as he was about to enter his long-expected country, death put an end to his laborious life, and ushered him into a "better country, which is a heavenly one." He was one hundred and ten years old when he died. "His eyes were not dimmed, neither his natural strength abated." And such was his mysterious departure, that "no man knoweth of his sepulchre unto this day."

THE FAITH OF MOSES.

I. *What faith enabled him to sacrifice.*

1. *Princely honors.* "He refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter." We can conceive of no worldly distinction worthy to be compared with that which gratuitously offered itself to him. As the adopted son of Pharaoh's daughter, he was doubtless entitled to all the advantages of a royal court. As a prince he had the prospect of succeeding Pharaoh as king, he having but an only daughter, whose whole soul had been captivated by Moses. It was a most tempting opportunity. The crown and throne and sceptre of Egypt awaited him. The wealthiest, and most refined, and oldest monarchy then in existence was his, with all its trappings and honors, if he chose.

But how did he act? Did he entertain the golden dream of future worldly glory? Nay! he refused point blank to entertain for one moment the thought of such honor. "He refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter," the richest, noblest, kindest, and most tender princess in all the world. He must have loved such a lady with the love of a child, yet he declined the worldly advantages which such relationship proffered him. There was nothing in the shining diadem that could captivate his heart, though it might dazzle his eyes. He was an heir of faith, the son of a higher power, and, therefore, anticipated a nobler kingdom than those of earth—a kingdom which cannot be moved—a kingdom that shall stand when all others shall have crumbled into dust.

2. *Palatial pleasures.*

Were Moses profligately inclined, this was just his opportunity. Every conceivable pleasure was at his command. To pursue a carnal life, he had access to as much money as he might desire. It is not necessary to specify the pleasures in which he might have freely indulged, had he been so disposed, for every lust to which a carnal heart is heir might be comprehended in the catalogue. Our subject, too, at this time, was in the midst of his youthful vigor, when he would be more easily assailed than at any later period. He was unmarried, and beset by snares on every hand, but having the "root of the matter in him," and knowing Him who is invisible, he conquered the flesh, with all its carnal appetites. He

yielded not to temptation ; he made temptation succumb to him. He was fully aware that the "pleasures of sin were only for a season," and that the baneful fruits of sin would be everlasting in their effects. Verily, "the wages of sin is death," while its pleasures are only for a season ; they are evanescent. Like bubbles on the face of the water, they vanish in a moment. The pleasure of this transitory world is but a phantom, holding forth a golden apple ; but when we put forth an eager hand to seize it, lo ! it vanishes, and instead of the luscious fruit, there is nothing but tainted gas, offensive to the sense.

Earthly pleasure is an enticing cup ; the lips of anticipation burn to taste the nectar, but, ere the hand can grasp it, the effervescence dies out, and disappointment stains the dregs. Earthly pleasure is a rainbow, beautiful with prismatic rays, but when we seek its smile, it melts into the cloud, and we find it all a delusion.

True pleasure is a prize, to be won only on one condition, viz., "Godliness, which is profitable unto all things, having the promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come." Moses could not be allured by the pleasures of this sinful life. His faith led him to seek pleasures more substantial and abiding.

"This world is all a fleeting show,
For man's illusion given ;
The smiles of joy, the tears of woe
Deceitful shine, deceitful flow.
There's nothing true but Heaven.

“And false the light on Glory’s plume
As fading hues of even;
And Love, and Hope, and Beauty’s bloom,
Are blossoms gathered for the tomb.
There’s nothing bright but Heaven.

“Poor wanderers of a stormy day,
From wave to wave we’re driven;
And Fancy’s flash, and Reason’s ray,
Serve but to light the troubled way.
There’s nothing calm but Heaven.”

3. *Egyptian opulence.*

The riches of Egypt were immense, but could not bribe Moses. He knew that material wealth did not constitute manhood, much less sainthood. He aspired for something higher than earthly riches to make him great. Earthly riches are not in themselves objectionable. When wisely applied, they are desirable; but to make of them a golden calf to be worshipped, this is where the mistake lies. The word of God does not teach that *money* is the root of all evil. That would not be correct. It simply teaches that the “*love* of money is the root of all evil.” This unholy passion was not experienced by this man of God. He sought riches of a superior character, “treasures which neither moth nor rust can corrupt—an inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away.” When he was come to years, he refused Egypt with all its glittering wealth and honors. He breathed in a higher atmosphere, and sought higher objects. Faith enabled him to see the vanity of things below, and the reality of things

above ; and, therefore, he could cheerfully sacrifice his worldly prospects for his Heavenly anticipations.

II. *What faith enabled him to prefer.*

1. *Affliction with God's people.* "Choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God."

He preferred a life of suffering with God's people, than a life of pleasure with the devil's family. By the telescopic aid of faith, he could see the proximate end of believers' afflictions. He saw that the "light affliction" of God's people was but for a moment, and would work for them a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory. He could, therefore, "rejoice in tribulation." The pleasures of the worldly terminate in death ; the afflictions of the faithful, in life—life for evermore. Far better is it, indeed, to put on a garment of mourning in this fleeting world, and to wear the white robe of bridal purity and blessedness in the Heavenly and eternal world. Far better, I say, to be afflicted in life, and then to be restored in death to health and life immortal, than to live in sinful ease, and be afflicted in death's hour with the worm of remorse, that shall eternally gnaw at our very vitals, till we cry agonizingly for relief, and nothing but the tormenting echo to repeat the wail of anguish.

To suffer affliction with God's people here, means to enjoy with them hereafter the "far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory." To enjoy with the ungodly the "pleasures of sin for a season," means to suffer hereafter the weight of Divine wrath, which

shall crush us down in everlasting despair. Who, then, will not commend Moses' choice?

2. *Religious reproach.*

"Esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than all the treasures of Egypt." How deeply religion was imbedded in the strata of his soul! How near his heart's affection were the saints of the Most High! Moses was an unhesitating believer in the coming Messiah. He knew that He would have to endure the contradiction of sinners, and be persecuted in the most malignant spirit. He knew that He would be contemptuously spat upon, mercilessly buffeted, derisively taunted, and ignominiously slain. Having faith in the promised Christ thus to be treated, he felt that he could suffer reproach for Him. He deemed it an infinitely greater privilege to share Christ's reproach than to receive the blandishments of the world. Many generations before the injunction was given, "If any man serve me, let him take up his cross and follow me," he had literally obeyed. He took up his cross. It was his badge of honor. He was more proud of it than if the Egyptian crown decked his brow. Shall we not emulate this illustrious saint—this man so much like an angel? Is not the prayer burning with holy passion, ready to fire the soul, "Lord, make me such as Moses was. Enable me, as he did, to reject the tempting offers of a flattering, treacherous world, and to choose the objects which attracted his attention. Especially may the cross, or the reproach of Jesus, Thy Son, be my

choicest treasure." "God forbid that I should glory save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ"? May God grant us that faith that will enable us to adopt the choice of Moses. To bear the "reproach of Christ" here, is to reign with Him hereafter. Unwillingness to do this will expose us to the reproach of devils.

3. *The prospect of future blessedness.*

"He had respect unto the recompense of reward."

The faith of Moses enabled him to look forward and upward. It soared as on eagle pinion upward to its celestial treasure, and having obtained a glimpse of it, he had no desire for worldly honors. He knew that his reward would be glorious, worthy of infinite love, and wisdom, and of the riches of Divine grace.

Why is it that so many have turned their backs upon the world, with all its vanities? They are actuated by the same principles which governed Moses. Why is it they prefer to suffer affliction with God's people, rather than enjoy the pleasures of sin? Their faith enables them to foresee the future. They have "respect unto the recompense of reward." Their shining day is to come. By faith they have already been permitted to stand on the sunny peaks of Pisgah, and through the vista they have descried the glowing crowns, the gushing fountains, and the verdant plains of the promised land. And having seen the King in His beauty, and the land that is afar off, their own great desire is to "be with Christ, which is far better." Who would barter away his soul's

glowing prospects of everlasting glory, for the momentary gratification of the flesh?

III. *What faith enabled him to accomplish.*

Three events are specified :

1. *To forsake Egypt.*

This was no mean performance. It required a magnanimous faith to do this. He must have seen Him who is invisible, or he could not have endured such trial. That sight strengthened him. To leave Egypt, the land of grandest pyramids, and temples, and colleges, and palaces in all the world; Egypt, the highest seat of learning, and science, and art, and refinement; Egypt, the most fertile and cultivated, the richest and fairest land on earth; Egypt, with all its beautiful surroundings and prospects, where Moses might be "monarch of all he surveyed"—to leave such a country and to abandon such prospects, to become an humble shepherd in the land of Midian, and a wandering pilgrim with the afflicted Hebrews, required strong faith. When I see him leading 600,000 men on foot, beside their families and others, through intricate and unfamiliar paths, carrying unleavened dough on their shoulders from Rameses to Succoth, where they baked their dough into unleavened cakes, and then from Succoth to Etham, and then turning from Etham to Pihahiroth before Baal Zephon, and tabernacling in Migdol, and from thence to the Red Sea, through which they passed on dry land—when I see all this, and know how luxuriously he might have lived in Egypt, I see

in him the hero of faith and a worthy example to follow. If we have his faith, we, too, will leave the Egypt of sinful ease, with all its attractions, for a Heavenly pilgrimage.

2. *To establish the passover and sprinkling of blood.*
See Exodus xii.

Moses and the children of Israel acted promptly to the Divine command, and were spared. "He that destroyed the firstborn did not touch them, for he found blood on their lintels and on their side-posts." If we would escape the Divine displeasure, we must be under the sign of the blood of the covenant. If the blood of Jesus be visible on our hearts and in our homes, God will spare us as He did the children of Israel, and we shall live forever.

3. *To triumph over the enemy.*

Never was there a clearer manifestation of God's providential interposition than this event. That faith which moved Moses to risk his life carried him safely over. That presumption which led Pharaoh and his host to pursue Moses and his people buried the enemy in the depths of the sea. Well might Moses and the redeemed people praise God for their deliverance, for it was complete. Ex. xv. 1-4. We must pass through the Dead Sea before we reach the shores of life eternal. Have we that faith that can bear us safely over? It is presumptuous to live without it, as it is fatal to die without it. If this faith be ours, our foes shall come no further than death's narrow sea, for, like the Egyptians of old, they shall be buried out of our sight forever.

CHAPTER XV.

HEB. XI. 30.

30 By faith the walls of Jericho fell down, after they were compassed about seven days.

THE circumstances which led to the fall of Jericho may be found in the sixth chapter of Joshua. Jericho was a city belonging to Benjamin, twenty miles northeast of Jerusalem and six miles from the river Jordan. It was designated, by Moses, "the city of palm trees." Deut. xxxiv. 3. Josephus states that the balsam tree grew within the territory of this city. This was the first citadel which Joshua and his men besieged and captured, after having led the Israelites across the Jordan into Canaan. While renowned for its profligacy, Jericho has been immortalized on account of the supernatural exploits performed there. Joshua, the principal character in this thrilling drama, descended from Ephraim, and was the son of Nun and the grandson of Cush. For several years he had been the zealous servant and faithful companion of Moses, and after the decease of that distinguished patriarch, he assumed the leadership of the children of Israel. His original name was "Oshea." He was one of the spies sent by Moses into the land of Canaan. We have an interesting account of that circumstance in the twelfth chapter of Numbers. The meaning of his original name "Oshea" is a savior. Subsequently Moses called him Joshua, *i. e.*, "he

shall save," or the salvation of Jehovah, referring to the deliverance which Jehovah would effect for them.

The instructions on this eventful occasion are as follows: "Pass on and compass the city, and let him that is armed pass on before the ark of the Lord." To the priests he speaks thus, "Take up the ark of the covenant and let seven priests bear seven trumpets of rams' horns before the ark of the Lord." With these instructions they unanimously complied. He then commands the people that they "shall not shout nor make any noise with their voice, neither allow any word to proceed out of their mouth until the day he bids them shout, then shall ye shout." The following morning the priests commence operations. They blow with their trumpets, yet are the walls unmoved. This they do seven successive days, and at the seventh blast on the seventh day, the people shouted when they heard the blast of the priests' trumpets, and the well-fortified walls of Jericho fell.

The text represents faith as the medium by which all this occurred. Faith has accomplished a thousand wonders, and not the least is the one specified in the words of our text.

FAITH *vs.* WALLS OF JERICH0.

I. *In what this faith consisted.*

It consisted in this fact, that there was no tendency in the instruments employed to bring about such a result; there was, in short, improbability of every such a revolutionary occurrence. Neither their na-

tive sagacity nor past experience would suggest that mere breathing through rams' horns could level those massive walls ; and the faith of these illustrious men consisted in the belief that God could in some mysterious manner bless these humble instruments in the accomplishment of his purposes. These men believed that the Almighty could from the most unlikely instrument perform that which was supernatural. Their faith was of the genuine stamp, and bore the impress of Omnipotence. It was that faith described by the poet, which "laughs at impossibilities, and cries, it shall be done."

Then again, there was everything to discourage their faith—the scoffs of the enemy. We can imagine how the eyes of the natives gloated as they bent over their lofty battlements, and ridiculed those poor Jews as they walked round the city day after day, blowing through those horns. There was enough to discourage them in the prosecution of their work, and they would have been crushed by despair but for the invincible character of their faith. That faith is seen in the dauntless perseverance of their work, despite the improbable nature of their instruments, and their continued obstacles. It was a severe trial of their faith. It stood the test. It had an unflinching hold on Deity, and finally overthrew the apparently impregnable fortress of Jericho. Faith made rams' horns Divine trumpets. It is indispensable that we too should exercise faith in the weapons of our warfare, which are not carnal, but spiritual, and mighty through God in the pulling down of strongholds.

Though we are but as earthen vessels, ourselves, weak and feeble, we must remember that the excellency of the power is of God, not of us. We are assured that if we unceasingly blow in the Gospel trumpet, the Jericho of sin must surrender and all its barricades be overthrown. What faith did in Joshua's days it can still accomplish.

II. *Faith in God is absolutely necessary to secure success in any good work.*

It was not the rams' horns after all that demolished those fortifications, for if others blew in them they would have stood as erect and defiant as ever. Nor did the walls fall of themselves. It was that faith which laid hold of a higher power that accomplished the work. This teaches that faith in God is indispensable to the fulfilment of any worthy achievement. Without faith we can accomplish no great spiritual results. With it, we may hurl pyramids of difficulties into the sea, and triumphantly perform the work God has assigned us. What levelled to the dust those massive structures that seemed to defy penetration? Not the instrument itself, but the power of God laid hold of by faith. For seven days did they persevere in their laborious undertaking, and "on the seventh day they encompassed the city seven times," and at the seventh blast of the trumpets on that day the walls fell with a terrible crash. So complete was the overthrow, "that they fell down flat, so that the people went up into the city, every man straight before him, and they took the city." Again we ask,

what was the secret of their success? A syllable of five letters furnishes the answer, "faith." Faith not only can seize mountains of difficulties, and cast them into the sea as though they were small pebbles, but it can penetrate the strongest fortresses and bring them crumbling unto the ground. With faith, nothing is impossible.

Ministers may blow loud and strong in the trumpets of salvation Sabbath after Sabbath, yet the strong citadel of the human heart will not yield to the sound, unless we exercise unwavering faith in God, that He will accompany the message with His blessing. If with an unstaggering faith we still "lift up our voice and spare not," in due time the defiant walls of the citadel shall totter and fall. God can as easily, by our instrumentality, overcome the stubbornness of the sinful heart as He did by His ancient people strike down the walls of Jericho. The Gospel is still the power of God unto salvation. "The arm of the Lord is not shortened, that it cannot save." Let us then awake, put on our strength, shake ourselves from the dust, loose the bands from off our necks, and boldly go forth in the name of the Lord to do battle against the mighty; then He will come forth out of His pavilion, and make men feel that there is a God in Israel. God is ready to do his part if we are ready to do ours. The sword of the Spirit is as keen as ever, and the Gospel trumpet as musical as ever.

It is a grand error we often commit, when we surmise as to the want of greater success in the service

of our Lord. Considering how half-hearted we often are, the wonder is that we have any success at all. Sometimes we say, if the Church were only moved to another location, or if it were altered a little, the good work would go on much better. Sometimes we say, if we had a different minister we would be surer of success. Now it has often happened that such changes have proved detrimental to the Church. Sometimes we say, if we had a different set of officers in the Church, and better Church government, we should be more prosperous. Now that may be sometimes true, but not often. We want something greater than all these changes. We need more of that faith that admits no doubt, and that overcometh the world. We see a locomotive engine on the railway which will not move. The company dismisses the old driver and employs a new one in his place; still it does not budge. They try another, and another, but with no better result. Finally, one suggests that such a wheel should be altered, or replaced by another, or the cylinder needs repairing, and a little different arrangement elsewhere. Still it will not proceed. While others are discussing as to the changes necessary, some one steps forward, and says, "Friends, you are all mistaken. The engine is all right; what you need is steam. It cannot move, because you have no fire under the engine, nor water in its boiler. It may want a little paint here and there, but that is all. What you need is to get up the steam."

So with the Christian Church. Whatever changes

we might make, though the house be fixed ever so attractively; though we alter the windows, make the ceiling higher or lower, put in a new organ, and make other improvements; though we change the minister and officers, and effect a general transformation, yet will the Church not progress a tittle unless we have something more than that. To alter this, that, and the other, will be of no avail, unless we have faith, propelling like steam, in the Church. We must exercise unshaken faith in God and His machinery, if we would push the cause of Christ forward.

Let us, then, work as those who mean to prosper. Let faith inspire us to unremitting zeal in the service of our Lord. Let us toil on in faith, and success will be ours. We shall have the satisfaction of knowing that our "labor is not in vain in the Lord," and dying with the wreath of unfading honor encircling and adorning our brow, we shall ascend to our throne on high, amid the thundering acclamations of rejoicing angels and the rapturous plaudits of ransomed souls, while the Master's voice of welcome, sweeter than the harps of Paradise, shall ring with Heavenly symphony in our wondering ears, "Well done, thou good and faithful servant, enter thou into the joy of thy Lord."

Let us in conclusion learn:

1. *That faith is indispensable to the overthrow of sin.*
2. *That repeated efforts must be made to its overthrow.*
3. *That sin will eventually be overthrown and its captives delivered.*

Jericho *must* surrender. Sin *shall* be doomed. The mouth of the Lord hath spoken it. "Even the captives of the mighty shall be taken away, and the prey of the terrible shall be delivered; for I will contend with him that contendeth with thee, and I will save thy children." Let us, then, be encouraged. There is no such thing as failure in Christian work. Success is ours if we have faith enough to believe it.

CHAPTER XVI.

HEB. XI. 31.

31 By faith the harlot Rahab perished not with them that believed not, when she had received the spies with peace.

“’Tis faith that purifies the heart,
’Tis faith that works by love,
That bids all sinful joys depart,
And lifts the thoughts above.”— *Watts*.

LOVE has usually been recognized as the Queen of the Christian graces. Yet without faith there can be no love. Faith is the very foundation of love. Unless we believe in God, we can entertain no love toward Him. We have already seen how this heavenborn principle is the fountain, where the streams of good works flow. No service is acceptable unto God but that which is the outcome of faith. It is the prayer of faith which is answered; the work of faith which is rewarded; the fight of faith which is crowned; and the offerings of faith which are accepted. We are justified by faith; sanctified by faith; and saved by faith. By faith we stand; by faith we walk; by faith we live; by faith we conquer, for “this is the victory which overcometh the world, even our faith.” Upon her conversion to God, such was the faith imparted to Rahab, and which accounted for her moral heroism.

THE FAITH OF RAHAB.

From it we learn three lessons :

I. *The transforming power of faith.*

We see this to a wonderful degree in the case before us. When faithless, this woman was an abandoned character. When faith-blessed, she became a chaste and honorable woman. In her former condition, she was a child of the devil; a rebel against God; a bane to society; and lost her womanhood in her harlotry. In her changed state, effected by faith, she was made a daughter of the Most High; retrieved her character; and became a blessing to the chosen people of Israel. There has been considerable controversy concerning Rahab's position and reputation. Some have contended that she was not a lewd woman; that the term "harlot" simply means "hostess," namely, one who entertains boarders. The most reliable authorities, however, have satisfactorily shown that she was an abandoned character, their chief argument being that the Hebrew and Septuagint versions exactly correspond, and that the word for "harlot" in both dialects means what is ordinarily understood by the term in the present day.* She may have been a hostess who boarded strangers travelling from place to place. But that she was a notorious sinner, there can be no room for doubt, and it is probable enough that she had kept a house of ill-repute. The sentiment that it is not

* See Olshausen, Ellicott, Stuart and Scott on Hebrews xi. 31.

likely that Rahab, if she had been a bad woman, would have been chosen as an ancestor of our Saviour, is absurd, for others were his progenitors, who, in their converted state, perpetrated fouler crimes than ever this woman did in her unconverted condition. The man after God's own heart did that which was after the devil's mind.

Yet, fallen as she was, she did not sink so low in the pit of degradation but the arms of mercy could reach her. With all her vileness, her reformation and conversion were not hopeless. By grace, through faith, she was immediately transformed from the worthless wretch into a useful servant. She was probably converted a short while before the arrival of the spies, and it was in consequence of that saving faith which she had received that she entertained so spontaneously and generously her, strange visitors. What faith accomplished for her, it can still accomplish. There is no character this side of perdition but Almighty grace can convert, and saving faith transform. A host of sinners, as vile as Rahab or Mary Magdalene, have experienced the converting grace of God, and the transforming power of faith, and have led lives of Christian usefulness. The moment that the soul is converted, that very moment it believes, and the moment it believes, that moment it cries, "Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do?" The whole current of life is changed, just as we have seen streams made to flow in other directions.

II. The adventurous spirit of faith.

It surmounts every difficulty and danger in the accomplishment of its mission. We have a forcible illustration of this in the example before us. Rahab imperilled her life by the course of conduct which she pursued. She would have never ventured on that course, but for that faith which saved her. It was this faith that inspired her with dauntless courage to face the danger, and confront the difficulty. If we turn to Joshua ii., we shall discover the danger to which she exposed herself, and learn how narrow was her escape. It was this deep-rooted principle of faith, that prompted her to such heroism. By the eye of faith she recognized the two spies from Shittim as God's messengers, and under the inspiration of this principle, she was led, at the peril of her life, to screen them so dexterously. "She had brought them up to the roof of the house, and hid them with the stalks of flax, which she had laid in order upon the roof." Joshua ii. 6. True, she uttered a falsehood on this memorable occasion; but we cannot indorse the statement of that grand, but mistaken preacher, the late James Wells, of the Surrey Tabernacle, London, "that God sanctions lies to carry out His purposes." This part of her conduct only demonstrates the weakness of the flesh; her daring exhibition of faith shows her moral prowess. Failings belong to the best of the children of men.

What faith enabled this woman to undertake and accomplish, it can still do and dare. As there is "nothing too hard for the Lord," so there is nothing

too difficult for faith to undertake and overcome. It has stood the test of the hottest fires, without losing a shade of its illustrious brightness; it has slept in a den of lions, without receiving a single scar on its seraphic countenance; it has danced upon the edge of the gleaming cimeter, without a solitary bruise; it has extinguished the fury of the angriest flames, without the slightest injury; it has scaled the highest peaks of danger, and sang the song of triumph over its vanquished foes. Though a host encamp around him who possesses this faith, he need not fear. There is no cowardice about this principle. It is a heroic virtue. It makes its subjects irresistible. It risks with fearless intrepidity upon any mission enjoined by Heaven, despite a thousand dangers. It makes us the heroes of a God-hating world.

III. *The compensating quality of faith.*

“By faith Rahab perished not with them that believed not.” The unbelieving, refers to the idolatrous citizens of Jericho, who treated the claims of the Israelites to the land of Canaan with contumacy, and discredited what Jehovah had said concerning them. Not only did her faith save her, but her whole family, consisting of her aged parents, brothers and sisters—yea, “all that she had, and she dwelleth in Israel *even* unto this day; because she hid the messengers, which Joshua sent to spy out Jericho.” (Joshua vi. 25.) The scarlet line arrangement, was faithfully kept. While all the unbelievers in Jericho

were destroyed, she and hers were saved. She might have betrayed the spies, and thus exposed them to a cruel death. She, however, befriended them, and for this act of faith she was remembered and rescued by God, and all that she had.

Faith has not only saved individuals, but families. It has preserved many a household, not only from temporal, but eternal destruction. In response to the Philippian jailer's awakening cry, the Apostle said, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, thou and thy house." The faith of one member in the family may influence favorably the whole household, and lead them to enjoy the blessing of salvation. If truly we have faith in the Son of God, it will lead us to exert ourselves for the spiritual welfare of our kindred and friends. None can be selfish, or indifferent, who knows this saving and generous grace.

There was a man in England who walked seven miles every Sunday to a place where alone, in his opinion, the Gospel was *truly* preached. He was exceedingly jealous for the "purity of the doctrine," and declared that he "could not sit under religious instruction elsewhere." The spirit of his religion, however, was not such as marked Him "who went about doing good," for it consisted in an evil temper, self-conceit, carnal security, and an uncharitable, selfish disposition. One day he was met and interrogated by a friend: "Where is your wife?" "Wife," he replied, and not one word more. "What!" inquired his friend, "Does she not go with you?"

"O no! she never goes anywhere," was the husband's answer. "Well, but don't you try to get her along, and the children?" said the friend. "No! The fact is, I think if I look to myself, that is quite enough." "What!" said the other, flashing with indignation, "and do you believe you are God's elect?" "Yes." "Well, I don't think you are, because you are worse than a heathen man and a publican, for you don't care for your own household; therefore, I cannot believe that you give much evidence of being God's elect, for they love their fellow creatures."

The rebuke was proper. Selfishness is not the characteristic of the truly elect. Electing grace is not neglecting grace. Saving faith is not a selfish faith. It expands the whole being. It makes a man generous, whatever may have been his former exclusiveness. It makes him intensely anxious for the salvation of his own family and connections. As in Rahab's case, who was profoundly interested in the safety of her house, so will it be with us. Have we this faith? We must know it personally, ere we can interest ourselves in others. A man whose mind was greatly perplexed on the subject of "saving faith," had a dream, which seemed to explain it clearly to his mind. He said, "I thought I stood on some desolate spot, on the very edge of a steep cliff. Below, at a great depth, the sea was dashing violently against the bottom of the cliff. I stood with only half a footing on the edge, when, in a moment, something, I know not what, could not imagine what, whirled me over the precipice, and I felt myself fall-

ing and falling down into the sea beneath ; but, suddenly, how I cannot tell, I thought I caught hold of a crag on the side of the cliff as I was falling past it, and there hung with one hand, grasping a small piece of rock. I hung a few seconds, and then I felt that the crag was crumbling in my fingers, or breaking away from the sides. What was I to do ? The next second I must fall, and be dashed to atoms. All at once I turned and looked behind me, and I saw a figure coming toward the cliff and walking on the water. He came nearer and nearer, till he stood just underneath where I was hanging, and although the distance downward was great, yet I thought I could see the expression of his countenance—that it was a kind and gentle one ; I could even see that our eyes met, and instantly I heard him whisper softly to me, ‘Let go, let go.’ I let go, and I fell into his arms, and was saved.” He understood the dream thus : “That crag was self-righteousness, and every false refuge that crumbles in the grasp of the sinner. He who came walking to him on the water was Jesus Christ, the Son of God. The words “Let go,” were the same as the words “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved.” Faith, then, is the letting go of every false refuge, and dropping into the arms of an Almighty Deliverer. What a simple act, yet how sublime ! Such faith we may instantly experience. Eternally we shall not lose it.

Art thou a Rahab, or an Ahab ? There is mercy even for you. The vilest may find a welcome in Jesus Christ. “Him that cometh unto me, I will in

no wise cast out." Only believe, and the past is forgiven. Only believe, and the past is forgotten. Only believe, and the past is obliterated. Only believe, and you pass from death unto life. Only believe, and you become the family of a household that can never be torn asunder. Only believe, and Omnipotent power is pledged to protect and preserve you, through faith unto salvation. Only believe, and yours will be the "abundant entrance into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ."

"O how unlike the complex works of man,
Heaven's easy, artless, unincumbered plan!
No meretricious graces to beguile,
No clustering ornaments to clog the pile:
From ostentation, as from weakness free,
It stands like the cerulean arch we see,
Majestic in its own simplicity.
Inscribed above the portal from afar,
Conspicuous as the brightness of a star,
Legible only by the light they give,
Stand the soul-quickenings words, 'Believe, and live.'"

CHAPTER XVII.

HEB. XI. 32.

32 And shall I more say? for the time would fail me to tell of Gedeon, and of Barak, and of Samson, and of Jephthae; of David also, and Samuel, and of the prophets.

MAN is a mere cipher in himself, but if he has God to champion his cause, he is stronger than ten thousand times ten thousand. God and His Gideon are mightier than the universe. More is implied than language intimates in the assurance of the Angel of the Covenant, "The Lord is with thee, thou mighty man of valor." Was it not this same Angel who, in His last commission, assured the disciples, "Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world"? It was this that made Peter bold, James strong, John valiant, and Paul courageous. They could do all things through Christ, who strengthened them.

Though brief, the biography of this heroic servant is of exciting interest. He was no less a hero in faith, than he was in war.

THE FAITH OF GIDEON.

I. *His faith recruiting.*

Before Gideon marshals his forces together to engage in bloody conflict, he flies for direction and help to the throne of grace. Deeply conscious of his utter inability, he trembles at the undertaking. He

appeals for an encouraging token. God graciously responds. The flesh and unleavened cakes which he laid on the rock were consumed by fire that burst forth from that rock. This was the first favorable omen. He was shortly after this endowed with fearless courage. He overthrew the altar of Baal, which Joash, his father, had raised. The daring act created terrific consternation. When it was inquired, "Who did this thing?" the people replied, "Gideon, the son of Joash, hath done this thing." The consequence was, the Midianites and the Amalekites and the children of the East were greatly infuriated. Of course, war was declared, which generally is the offspring of anger. "But God's Spirit was upon Gideon." Faith's propelling power was in his soul. Having charged his messengers to go throughout all Manasseh, to Asher, Zebulun, and Naphtali, and having succeeded in bringing his men together, he turns again to God, and thus pours out his soul: "If thou wilt save Israel by mine hand, as thou hast said, behold, I will put a piece of wool in the floor, and if the dew be on the fleece only, and it be dry on all the earth beside, then shall I know that thou wilt save Israel by mine hand, as thou hast said." Some might be disposed to censure Gideon for this conditional petition, yet we must remember he makes it with reverence. Under the guidance of faith, he appeals to the right source, and the result is, the appearance of that mysterious and favorable phenomenon. His prayer was granted.

Let us learn from this circumstance not to enter

upon any great undertaking without first laying the matter before God in prayer. "If ye shall ask anything of the Father in my name, it shall be done unto you, that the Father may be glorified in the Son." Gideon is further encouraged to seek another phenomenal and favorable sign. "Let not thine anger be hot against me, and I will speak but this once. Let me prove, I pray Thee, but this once with the fleece; let it now be dry upon the fleece, and upon all the ground let there be dew." This desire, too, is gratified that same night. Faith never fails. It always succeeds. While it often seeks modestly, it never seeks doubtingly, and consequently never seeks unsuccessfully. There are none so strong as those who have transactions with the old throne; none so mighty as those who have dealings with Omnipotence. Clad with Divine power, the man of faith is invincible. He is a terror to devils. The tallest giants in iniquity quake at his approach. Divinity is stamped on the countenance of such a man. Heaven beams through his eyes. The stability of the Rock of Ages marks his character. Yea,

"Satan trembles when he sees
The weakest saint upon his knees."

A life of faith, means a life of prayer; a life of prayer, means a life of power. The worst men are awestruck in the presence of such a life.

II. *His faith triumphing.*

Having consulted his God by prayer, Gideon was almost almighty to confront the enemy. He meets

them without the slightest perturbation. With his three hundred men he vanquishes a host represented as "laying along in the valley like grasshoppers for multitude," while two of their princes, Oreb and Zeeb, are slain.

With his valiant three hundred, he again pursues the Midianites, and having slain the two kings of Midian, Zebah and Zalmunna, they are completely subdued. So decisive is the victory, that with only three hundred men, he slays one hundred and twenty thousand trained warriors, not one of his little army missing. Amazing exploit! Surely he could not have so triumphed but for his alliance to God by faith. It was the "sword of the Lord and of Gideon" that accomplished the feat. Gideon was shielded by faith, fought under the direction of faith, sustained by the power of faith, and conquered through the medium of faith. The sword of the Lord, wielded by the hand of faith, achieved the victory. So permanent in its result was this victory, that the enemy "lifted up their heads no more, and the country was in quietness forty years in the days of Gideon." Without his God he could have done nothing. He and his three hundred would have been but as babes in the hands of the enemy, but with his God, he and his little army were mightier than the one hundred and twenty thousand whom they slew. Independently of God, the sainted heroes of the Old Testament would have been as helpless reeds in the hands of trained and tried warriors; but linked to God by faith, nothing could stand be-

fore them. "Who through faith subdued kingdoms * * * out of weakness were made strong, waxed valiant in fight, put to flight the armies of the aliens."

Let Gideon's God be our God; let his faith be inherited by us, and we shall triumph over deadlier foes than those of Gideon and his men. "We shall overcome the world, the flesh, and the devil." The devil shall flee from us, the flesh shall lose its power, and the world be crushed under foot. "The weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but spiritual," for the destruction of spiritual foes. We may not be summoned to fight on the battle field as Gideon and others were. We may not have the opportunity of distinguishing ourselves in blood red war, as Nelson in Trafalgar; Wellington in Waterloo; Havelock in Lucknow; Garibaldi in Italy; Von Moltke in France, or Grant in Virginia; but we are summoned to enlist in a nobler warfare, "the good fight of faith." We may earn higher distinctions, and fame more lasting than can be won in the sanguinary contests of earth, namely, the commendation of the King of kings and Lord of lords.

III. *His faith instructive.*

1. *Teaching that nothing can be successfully done apart from God.*

Taking it for granted that Gideon wielded a sword on this memorable occasion, yet it would not have served better than a common pin in the presence of such mighty foes, but for the Divine encouragement.

“The Lord is with thee, thou mighty man of valor;” and the inspiring promise, “Surely I will be with thee, and thou shalt smite the Midianites as one man;” and the favorable tokens given by Jehovah of his triumphant success. Such may be said of other historical events in the Old Testament. The rod of Moses would have been absolutely worthless but for the command of God. It was this command that gave it its penetrating force. The serpent of brass would have been utterly inefficacious, but for the ordinance of God. The jaw bone in Samson’s strong hand could not have achieved the exploits attributed to it, but for the truth of the testimony, that “the Spirit of the Lord came mightily upon him.” The ram’s horns could have accomplished nothing, but for “the word of the Lord.” The pebble in David’s sling tells a tragic tale in “the name of the Lord.” We read of no sword in the hands of Gideon’s band, but simply “trumpets, with empty pitchers, and lamps within the pitchers.” They were to blow in those trumpets, and say, “The sword of the Lord and of Gideon.” This they did, and in response God interposed, so that the enemy was slain. Gideon and his three hundred, were made mighty through God. In the strength of the same God alone, can we overcome our spiritual adversaries.

2. Teaching that God alone is entitled to all the glory.

We observe how careful God is of His own glory. The day of battle is come, and we behold the people encamping beside the well of Harod 32,000 strong.

“There are too many,” says the Almighty, “lest Israel vaunt themselves against me, saying, ‘My own hand hath saved me.’” The result is the return of more than two thirds of the people. Though only 10,000 are left, the number must still be reduced, and another experiment must be tried. “Every one that lappeth of the water with his tongue, as a dog lap-peth, him shalt thou set by himself: likewise every one that boweth down upon his knees to drink.” Out of these ten thousand, only three hundred brought up the water with their hand and lapped. These were the elect and chosen. The question now is, “How is it possible for so few to vanquish so many, ‘who lay along in the valley like grasshoppers for multitude’?” The reply is at hand, “By the three hundred men that lapped will I save you, and deliver the Midianites into thy hand.”

It was God who interposed. It was God who fought for them and through them. It was God who gave them the victory. It was He, therefore, who was entitled to the glory. Here we are reminded of the characteristic language of the Egyptians prior to this event, “Let us flee from the face of Israel; for the Lord fighteth for them against the Egyptians.” It was this truth which inspired that psalm of victory from the lips of Moses and the children of Israel, “I will sing unto the Lord, for He hath triumphed gloriously: the horse and his rider hath He thrown into the sea. The Lord is a man of war: the Lord is His name. Pharaoh’s chariots and his host hath He cast into the sea: his chosen captains also are

drowned in the Red Sea," Exodus xv. 1-4. David, in his twenty-fourth Psalm, sings in triumph, "The Lord strong and mighty, the Lord mighty in battle." Gamaliel understood somewhat the philosophy of this subject, when he warned the Jewish authorities, "Refrain from these men, and let them alone; for if this counsel or this work be of men, it will come to nought: but if it be of God, ye cannot overthrow it: lest haply ye be found even to fight against God." Oreb and Zeeb, Zebah and Zalmunna, the princes and kings of the Midianites, are but as lapdogs before the King of kings and the Lord of hosts; and 120,000 Midianites are but as ciphers to contend with that God, before whom "all nations are as nothing, and are counted to Him less than nothing and vanity. Who bringeth the princes to nothing; who maketh the judges of the earth as vanity." We are unconquerable if God is on our side. "No weapon formed against us shall prosper." Whatever victories we win on earth, we must ascribe to Him. In our triumph over the last enemy, death, our language of grateful acknowledgment shall be, "Thanks be to God who giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ."

CHAPTER XVIII.

HEB. XI. 32.

32 And what shall I more say ? for the time would fail me to tell of Gedeon, and of Barak, and of Samson, and of Jephthae; of David also, and Samuel, and of the prophets.

“ ——— In his face
Terror and sweetness labored for the place :
Sometimes his sun-bright eyes would shine so fierce,
As if their pointed beams would even pierce
The soul and strike the amaz'd beholder dead ;
Sometimes their glory would disperse and spread
More easy flame, and like the star that stood
O'er Bethlehem, promised and portend some good :
Mixt was his bright aspect, as if his breath
Had equal errands both of life and death :
Glory and mildness seemed to contend
In his fair eyes.”— *Quarles*.

MEN in olden time had a fabled giant who could not be subdued. Whenever he fell, the earth, his mother, infused into him such agility and power, that he instantly sprang up at the moment of contact, and slew his antagonists. Finally, Hercules, discovering the secret, grappled and upheld him, and not permitting him to touch the ground, he crushed him. It is contrariwise with the giant of faith. The earth is not his mother. He is a child of Heaven. If he descends to settle on the ground, his strength vanishes. He is helpless in the world's clutches.

Notwithstanding Samson's twofold defeat by the

weaker vessel, and that a broken one, his physical strength was prodigious. Despite his failings, he was a child of God, raised up to break the power and tyranny of the Philistines, and to humble their pride and obstinacy, who persisted to oppress his countrymen.

THE FAITH OF SAMSON.

I. *It was the channel of his physical strength.*

Four times in the history of this muscular believer, his strength is attributed to the Spirit of God. God's Spirit was instilled into him. Almighty influences lay imbedded in his soul. Some ridicule the idea of Samson performing the feats ascribed to him, but when the philosophic truth is borne in mind that "All power belongeth unto God," and hence derived from Him, we may easily account for Samson's extraordinary exploits, whose soul by faith was linked to Omnipotence.

"A first glance at this most truly human character, may, perhaps, convey the impression that it is altogether unlike that of any other man ; as if its possessor belonged to some other family of beings, and had strayed upon our planet by mistake ; just as an Indian butterfly is to be seen, once or twice in a century, flying in Hyde Park, the question being unsolved as to the means by which it could have arrived there. But deeper reflections will obliterate such an impression, and will lead us to the conclusion that the strangeness of the character of Samson arises not so much from its being unlike that of other men, as from

its being cast in a more gigantic mould.* Yet there was this great distinction between Samson and his coadjutors, that he was endowed with special power from on high. He was one of those Titanic men, whose physical qualities under God were specially adapted for a work which needed to be accomplished.

The first astounding feat performed by this man of faith is that recorded in Judges xiv. 6. It was at Timnath. "A young lion roared against him." Under a sudden impulse of supernatural energy, he grapples the ferocious animal, takes him on his brawny, sinewy arms, and "rent him as he would have rent a kid," though nothing was in his hand. The Spirit which descended on David when he slew the lion and the bear, descended on him. A short time before this event, we read "the Spirit of the Lord began to move him at times in the camp of Dan, between Zorah and Esthaol." The Vulgate renders it: "the Spirit of the Lord began to be-with him." The Septuagint version, "began to go forth with him." The Targum of Jonathan, "began to sanctify him." A distinguished French writer says, "began to strike him like the iron on the anvil." One of those remarkable times visited him on this memorable occasion.

Although opposed to making types of nearly every character in Old Testament history, I cannot refrain from making this extract: "Taking into account the entire history of Samson and his peculiar calling, the

* Wiseman's "Men of Faith," p. 280.

killing of the lion cannot be dismissed with mere astonishment as an unsurpassed feat of strength. Samson, as a Nazarite, was a living parable. The Nazarite was to be a living type and image of holiness, a symbol of entire consecration to the Lord. It was no mere ascetical institution, as if the outward self denial in meat and drink was in itself pleasing to the Lord; such a spirit was as foreign to Judaism as it is to Christianity. The Nazarite was an actual symbolical lesson in a religious and moral aspect; a kind of priest by his manner of life, as the priests, by the duties of their office, acted the part of a symbolical light and teacher to Israel. It is thus that Samson has been regarded as a type of Christ, and his victory over the lion as a figure of Him who goes forth conquering and to conquer; who among the wild beasts in the wilderness, in the power of the Spirit overcame the devil, that roaring lion; and who, in the language of the Psalmist, "treads upon the lion and the adder, and tramples the dragon under His feet."*

Jerome says, "We also are Nazarites in Christ, and are able to conquer the lions through His power." A higher authority declares, "I can do all things through Christ who strengtheneth me."

Samson's next exploit was the slaughter of thirty men of Ashkelon, whose foul hands were stained with the blood of the murdered innocents. This he did, not as an act of private revenge, but as the commissioned

* Fairbairn's "Typology of Scripture," vol. 2, p. 391.

avenger and deliverer of his people. We are next introduced to a deed performed in a revengful spirit. Being denied admittance into his wife's presence, he retaliates. Having caught three hundred foxes, or jackals, which still abound in the glens around Bethshemesh, he tied them in couples, tail to tail, with a lighted torch between, and drove them into the Philistines' cornfields, and vineyards, and olive grounds, where they made terrible depredations. This so exasperated the Philistines that they malignantly burnt to death Samson's wife and father-in-law. This led to another bloody affray. Samson smites the Philistines "hip and thigh with a great slaughter." This revengful deed was not without its accompanying blessing. It proved a most auspicious beginning in the subjection of the Philistine power. Yet we must remember, that this event in Samson's life does not justify us in making "*Lex talionis*" the law of our life and conduct. The Gospel injunction is to "overcome evil with good." The scene which next arrests our attention is the extraordinary feat recorded, "the cords that were upon his arms became as flax that was burnt with fire, and his bands loosed from off his hands." Surely the Spirit of God must have descended on him in mighty power. We are aware how slender a burnt rope of flax is. The rope retains its form, but the slightest touch crumbles it into dust. With the same ease, as though it were a burnt rope, did this hero snap asunder the new cords.

We cannot fail to see a strong resemblance be-

tween this incident in the life of Samson, and that in the life of Samson's Saviour, who, when betrayed into the hands of the enemy, as Samson was by his own countrymen, snapped the bands of death asunder with the same ease, as when He lifted His hand over the turbulent Galilean lake, and said, "Peace, be still."

We are now introduced to another unparalleled exhibition of physical prowess and power, "the slaying of a thousand men with a new jawbone of an ass." Imagine this Hercules just liberated from the cords which bound him fast, seizing so insignificant an instrument for his weapon, and pursuing the terror-stricken Philistines, smiting one heap after another, till a thousand had fallen dead at his feet.

"With the jawbone of an ass, heaps upon heaps,
With the jaw of an ass have I slain a thousand men."

As an expression of his devout gratitude to God, he called the scene of slaughter Ramath-lehi, which signifies "Jawbone height."

Bishop Wordsworth, endorsed by Wiseman, intimates that Samson did not acknowledge God in this wonderful feat. I cannot sympathize with their view. Whatever may have been Samson's failings, he was, notwithstanding all, a child of God, and always acknowledged a higher power in all his achievements. Soon after this, when "sore athirst," he acknowledges God for this very deliverance, and is encouraged to lift up his heart in prayer. "Thou hast given this great deliverance into the hand of

thy servant: and now shall I die for thirst and fall into the hands of the uncircumcised." His distressful cry was not in vain. "God clave a hollow place that was in the jaw, and there came water thereout; and when he had drunk, his spirit came again, and he revived; wherefore he called the name thereof Enhakkore, which is in Lehi unto this day." This fully justifies Dr. Kitto's remark on this passage: "It is a strong presumption in favor of the genuineness and vitality of his faith that he did so. Not many would have had such strong persuasion of the Lord's providential care as would lead them to cry to Him for water to supply their wants in the like exigency.

* * * The incident shows what manner of man essentially he was, and indicates the kind of spirit in which his great operations were conducted."*

I shall pass by the next sad event in his life, when he fell into a grievous sin, simply referring to his marvellous escape from Gaza at midnight, when he "took the doors of the gate of the city, and the two posts, and went away with them, bar and all, and put them upon his shoulders, and carried them to the top of an hill that is before Hebron." Though he betrayed himself into the hands of Delilah, and God had withdrawn his strength from him, yet, at death's threshold, with eyes plucked out, was he not altogether forsaken. He had still faith enough to commit himself into Jehovah's hands, and in answer to his importunate prayer, su-

* *Vide* "Kitto's Illustrations" *in loco*.

perhuman strength returned, and he toppled the building upon the lords and the people who had gathered to make sport of him. They little dreamed that they were sporting on the brink of destruction, and that in making sport of Samson, they were touching the apple of God's eye. "The Nazarite, in the moment of his own death, gained the greatest of his victories—a victory of Jehovah, the God of Israel, against Dagon, the idol of the Philistines. Being enticed, he had sinned; sinning, he had suffered; suffering, he had repented; repenting, he had prayed, and waited upon the Lord; waiting upon the Lord, he had renewed his strength."* "The dead which he slew at his death were more than they which he slew in life." All these feats he accomplished by faith which conveyed Divine strength into his person. The secret of his marvellous power was not in himself, but in God, who worked by him.† Faith in God accomplishes wonders still. It sustains the soul, and nerves the arm of the Christian soldier, and makes him invincible. He who leans on finite power cannot fight the battles of life successfully, and is already a conquered man. The nearer we are to God, the greater our strength, and the surer our success.

Come with me, and I will show you one who, if he cannot accomplish the feats of Samson, can accomplish something even higher. It is the youth, who,

* Wiseman's "Men of Faith," p. 353.

† Bruce's "Biography of Samson," p. 4.

without illustrious pedigree, or emblazoned heraldry, careless of the hollow flatteries of smooth-tongued hypocrites, or the cruel criticisms of an uncharitable world; who, having no cringing cowardice, or shrinking timidity, reposes with noble dignity and dependence on Almighty power. There is sublime grandeur in the towering mountain, that looks down with becoming loftiness on the lowly valley beneath; in the foaming cataract, that dashes with such tremendous velocity over the rugged precipice into the agitated waters below; in the majestic thunderbolt launched from the Divine hand, and sent rolling along the heavens; in the roaring billows, lashed by the fury of the tempest, and rising in mountain piles one upon the other. These are sublime spectacles. But sublimer far, the young man emerging out of obscurity with a cool, clear intellect, with a stout heart, steady nerves, flashing eyes, and determined feet, allying himself with the Almighty, a victor over his passions, controlling the elements, grappling the foes of God and humanity, dashing to the earth every obstacle that obstructs the way to fame; crushing with unflinching determination under foot all manner of oppression, gracefully lifting up and helping the downtrodden, deserving poor, and trampling in everlasting contempt, every giant temptation and seductive Delilah. This is sublimity surpassing all others. God enrolls such feats in the Registry of Glory.

CHAPTER XIX.

HEB. XI. 32.

32 And what shall I more say ? for the time would fail me to tell of Gedeon, and of Barak, and of Samson, and of Jephthae; of David also, and Samuel, and of the prophets.

BARAK, the son of Abinoam, is historically associated with the most illustrious woman of the day. Her name is Deborah, the wife of Lapidoth, who was not only a prophetess, but also a judge over Israel. So beautifully did her excellencies blend in her character, that she was deemed by Heaven worthy of filling the most responsible position. To her, Barak was under lasting obligations. His faith was materially strengthened by his intercourse with this model woman, and especially by his fellowship with Heaven.

THE FAITH OF BARAK.

I. *In its military triumph.*

It was a victory over a mighty host, both numerically and physically. Well might the sons of Israel cry unto the Lord, for they had been oppressed forty years, while the enemy on this occasion was fully equipped for the fight. They had nine hundred iron chariots, and were to all human appearance masters of the situation. Jabin was king. Sisera was captain. The foe was legion. Barak at first dreads to encounter them. He declines to engage in the war-

fare, though assured by our heroine "that the Lord would give Sisera into his hands," unless she accompanies him. She assents, and proceeds with him to Kedesh-Naphtali. Barak's men being ready, they march to Mount Tabor, ten thousand strong, strong in muscle, but stronger in faith. Sisera pursues them with his immense army, feeling confident as to the supposed issue. Doubtless the enemy considered it but mere child's play, to make a clean sweep of Barak and his ten thousand. Being unbelievers, however, they misplace their confidence when they place it in themselves. Man at best is but vanity. Vain indeed is the help of man in such conflicts as these. Barak, whose faith had taught him better sense, trusts not in himself, nor does he build his hope of success in his army, who were considerably in the minority, but he relies on God's almighty power, and pursuing the enemy in His strength, they are completely demoralized and defeated, so that every man in Sisera's army was slain.

Seeing his utter discomfiture, and fearing the disastrous results of the defeat, Sisera, who is sprightly and athletic, takes to his heels. Poor, deluded mortal! He escapes from one death to meet it in another form. Fleeing for protection to Jael's tent, the wife of Heber the Kenite, he lies down to rest. She refreshes him with some milk, and places a covering over him, so that he resigns himself to sleep in the blissful consciousness of security. It is a sleep, however, from which he awakes not. Taking a nail or pin, which fastens the tent rope on the ground, and a

hammer, she treads lightly to his side, and with one fatal blow she strikes the nail through his temple into his brain, and he dies.

This is what I call the sleep of self-delusion—a sleep that never awakes in life, but terminates in death. Such is the sleep of every infatuated sinner. Vainly dreaming of an escape from the wrath to come, they awake, like the rich man in torment, and find that they are held with chains of everlasting darkness, so that they cannot move or pass from thence.

This victory of Barak was comparatively an easy one, and we need not wonder, for the Lord of hosts was in the fight. “The Lord discomfited Sisera and all his chariots, and all his hosts, with the edge of the sword before Barak.” Judges iv. 15.

It was not so much Barak’s military expertness and adroitness which won for him this signal victory, as it was his unflinching faith in God. United by that faith to the Almighty and everlasting God, there could be no other than a triumphant victory. Barak’s faith was divinely rewarded. By faith his minority became a majority.

If this faith be ours, we, too, shall overcome at last, not a nation, but a world. “For this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith.” “The whole world is against you,” said an unconverted friend, to a well tried soldier of the cross. There was scarcely a moment’s pause, when he calmly but firmly replied: “Then I am against the whole world.”

The Christian warfare is an aggressive one. We make onslaught on the kingdom of darkness, and faith does not suffer us to relax our efforts. It urges us on and on, until the enemy can defend his position no longer, and the kingdom of sin is overthrown. We can conquer a frowning world, and a threatening hell, if, with Barak and Deborah, we have unshaken faith in the Lord Jehovah.

II. *In its grateful song.*

It recognizes God's hand in the conflict and conquest. It attributes the praise entirely to Him who rules over all, whose Spirit makes giants of striplings and lions of lambs.

We cannot enlarge on the features of this triumphant composition. It is one of the finest odes ever sung by mortal tongues. It is full of the sublimest poetry. It has seraphic flights. Like a mighty hydraulic, this song winds us up to God. True, poetry is soul-inspiring and heaven-exalting. Imagination, sanctified, lifts its subjects into the third heaven, sets them down at the foot of the throne, whence streams into their beatific vision floods of divine glory, whence strains of such transporting music greet their enchanted ears, that, with all their power of description, they are constrained to exclaim: "The half cannot be told."

Oh, what an extatic burst of symphony must have been struck when Barak and Deborah came to the strain, "Awake, awake, Deborah; awake, awake, utter a song: Arise, Barak, and lead thy captivity captive,

thou son of Abinoam. Then He made him that remaineth have dominion over the nobles among the people: the Lord made me have dominion over the mighty." And yet that other strain, "They fought from heaven; the stars in their courses fought against Sisera. The river of Kishon swept them away—that ancient river, the river of Kishon. O my soul, thou hast trodden down strength. Then were the horsehoofs broken by the means of the prancings, the prancings of their mighty ones." They must have sang as though they had learned their notes from an angel. And I have often thought with what terrible solemnity they must have sang those strains of condemnation, "Curse ye Meroz, said the angel of the Lord; curse ye bitterly the inhabitants thereof, because they came not to the help of the Lord, to the help of the Lord against the mighty." These were a people who preferred their own self-ease and indulgence to the glory of God. When Barak and Deborah were making desperate efforts for the deliverance of Israel, in bondage under Jabin, the Canaanitish king, the inhabitants of Meroz would not march with them into the conflict, but cowardly stayed at home. They took no part in the engagement, and hence shared not the laurels of victory.

Alas! how many are there yet of this stamp who will not come up to the help of the Lord! *The citizens of Meroz are typical of a large proportion of professed citizens of Zion.* It matters not how often, or how urgently you press them to interest themselves

in God's cause, they will not respond. They are spectators, not soldiers; idlers, not workers. Preferring their own self-ease, they desist from fighting the battles of the Lord; and, though they do absolutely nothing themselves, they are not backward in growling against those who try to be of some service to the Master's cause. Let us examine ourselves where we stand in reference to this subject. Do we fight the good fight of faith? Do we, like Barak, come up to the help of the Lord against the mighty? Or are we Merozian cowards, over whom the curse of Jehovah hangs? It is all very well to send flaming reports to the association, that *our* church numbers one thousand in membership, or five hundred, or one hundred, as the case may be, when the one-half are seldom found at communion and never seen in the prayer meeting. It is sad that it should be said, that at least one-half of our church members are but honorary members, or rather, as Spurgeon fitly said, "dishonorary members." How distressing the thought, when we consider the foes we have to battle with! How mighty is sin in the world, and how little is done by professed Christians to counteract its damning influence! In order to see with how much power sin reigns in the world, it is but necessary to observe, that the vast majority of the human race still groan beneath its iron fetters. Sin is the root of all evil—the source of every crime. Were there no sin, there could be no drunkenness or dissipation, no profanity or prostitution, no malice or murder. Were there no sin, there would be no need

of hospitals or almshouses, prisons or scaffolds, coffins or graves. But for sin, we should never have heard of those incarnate devils, Wilkes Booth and Guiteau. Aye! sin is a hideous monster. It is the fountain whence all the streams of iniquity flow. To know its mighty sway over the masses, consider how intemperance, for instance, one of its legitimate offspring, fills the world with distress, disgrace, and destruction.

From the results of our investigation, we learn that strong drink creates an annual expense of 1,491,-865,000 dollars, besides other losses and expenses aggregating 1,250,000,000 dollars. It causes annually 600 murders, 400 suicides, and 100,000 prisoners for various offences. It clothes unnumbered families in rags; sends 200,000 to poorhouses, hospitals, and other charitable institutions. It causes the annual deaths of 60,000 drunkards, including 570 deaths by delirium tremens, and 3,700 by other forms of insanity, making simultaneously 30,000 widows and 9,000 orphans. It wields such tremendous power in this country, that it can boast of 3,000,000 tipplers and drunkards. But worse than all, this evil is mighty in hurrying millions along the putrid stream of iniquity, over the tremendous precipice, into the gulf of irreparable ruin. While its votaries trample in the dust every sacred law, this hideous monster shuts out the means of grace, sears the conscience, and prepares the spirit for everlasting wretchedness.

Surely, then, we have a terrible foe to fight against, more terrible than Sisera's army. How, then, can we

suffer the enemy to make such havoc without offering resistance? The true soldier does not, will not suffer it.

Art thou a citizen of Zion, or a citizen of Meroz? If the latter, the Divine curse hangs over you. Beware, lest suddenly it may fall on you. It is not necessary to perpetrate some foul crime in order to be visited by God's judgment. Not to do good, is enough to provoke His displeasure. The people of Meroz were not cursed for what they did, but for what they did not, and would not do. To receive the Divine approval, we must not only "cease to do evil, but learn to do well." The curse which befell Meroz, was the utter destruction of the city, and the eternal damnation of its worthless inhabitants. "God's woe is yet on all those "who are at ease in Zion," and unless there be repentance and reformation, He will say unto them one day, "Depart, ye cursed," etc.

Hast thou been indifferent and indolent in the past, pray for divine mercy, and seek God's grace to revive you, for all your help must come from Him.

" And when the conflict's past
On yonder peaceful shore,
We shall repose at last
And see our foes no more,
The fruits of victory enjoy
And never more our arms employ."

CHAPTER XX.

HEB. XI. 32.

32 And what shall I more say? for the time would fail me to tell of Gedeon, and *of* Barak, and *of* Samson, and *of* Jephthae; *of* David also, and Samuel, and *of* the prophets.

“Remember, if He guard thee and secure,
Whoe’er assails thee, thy success is sure :
But if He leave thee, though the skill and power
Of nations, sworn to spoil thee and devour,
Were all collected in thy single arm,
And thou could’st laugh away the fear of harm,
That strength would fail, opposed against a push
And feeble onset of a pigmy rush.”—*Cowper*.

THOUGH the son of a concubine, Jephthah was a favorite of Heaven. From the record given, we learn that he was “a Gileadite, a mighty man of valor, and the son of an harlot.” His half brothers served him a discourteous act. Visiting the iniquity of the father upon the inoffensive child, they unceremoniously thrust him out of the family. Thus forsaken, the “Lord takes him up.” He is not left to fight the battle of life alone. The Lord of hosts is with him. He is not suffered to sink into the slough of despond, for underneath him are the everlasting arms. In process of time, these very brethren, with others, were only too glad to obtain his services, and were only too willing to occupy subordinate stations under him. A war was threatening. The Ammonites had already defeated the Gileadites, and were likely to

beat them again, unless some special providence interposed. A message is dispatched to Jephthah, beseeching him to come, and command the fight against the children of Ammon. Not only so. He whom they so contemptuously banished out of the family, they now invite to become the "head over all the inhabitants of Gilead." Verily God was with him, vindicating, protecting, encouraging, rewarding him.

He who exercises faith in the God of Jephthah, no matter what his earthly relationship, or how insignificant in the estimation of the world, God will befriend and bless him even in this life. His name at present may be despised, but his praise may yet be trumpeted; they who now look down on him with contempt, may yet look up at him with admiration.

THE FAITH OF JEPHTHAH.

1. *His preliminary exercise is to consult God by prayer.*

Having been appointed head and captain over the Gileadites, we learn that "he uttered all his words before the Lord in Mizpeh." He began at the right source. His first step was not a false one. He first sought the Divine guidance. It was granted. He sought God's companionship. God fought with him. Divinity stirred within him. He proved himself a hero at the throne of grace, and having conquered there, there was no earthly power that could overthrow him.

How many conquests have been won by the power of prayer! not only on fields of battle, but over self, and Satan. Who knows but prayer has had consid-

erable to do with some of our most brilliant triumphs on the battlefield, not only in patriarchal days, but in modern times—with Wellington in Waterloo; Nelson in Trafalgar; Washington in the Revolution; Havelock in Lucknow; Garibaldi in Italy; Grant and others in the late rebellion. My mind revolts against the idea of war as the means of settling disputes, yet it is no presumption to believe that some of the grandest victories on earth have been achieved in answer to prayer.

When Ethelred, the Saxon king of Northumberland, invaded Wales, and was about to give battle to the Britons, he observed near the enemy a number of unarmed men. He inquired who they were, and what they were doing. Being informed that they were monks of Bangor, praying for the success of their countrymen, the heathen prince replied, "Then they have first begun against us; attack them first." Here we see the prayer of faith a stimulus to the one, a terror to the other. Mary, Queen of Scots, dreaded the prayers of John Knox more than an army of ten thousand soldiers. If we would succeed in any new enterprise, let us learn from Jephthah's conduct, to commend our cause to God. "In everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving, let our requests be made known unto God."

2. *He is moved to make every honorable effort to effect a treaty of peace.*

He who is under the guidance of faith is not rash. Moved by this principle, he will do all he can to avert the calamity of a war. Jephthah dispatches several

messages to the Ammonitish king for this very purpose. These messages failing, there was no other alternative than to fight. Jephthah was no proud puffed Napoleon, or an arbitrary Bismarck. He did not fight because he wanted to fight, as is the spirit which marks most of our bloody contests. It is truly awful to reflect on hundreds of battles that might have been averted, but for the spirit of the Ammonitish king which manifested itself in proud, haughty, ambitious, blood-thirsty rulers and leaders. Hundreds of the fiercest battles have had their origin in trifling causes. Five of the worst battles have occurred on account of commercial controversies; twenty-two through jealousy toward those in higher stations; twenty-four in revenge; twenty-eight have been religious wars; thirty under the guise of friendly interposition; forty-four through covetousness; forty-four on account of disputed titles to the throne; fifty-five from civil wars; beside those of more recent times in Asia, for reasons that are scarcely discernible, unless it is greed and oppression. And we have it on substantial authority, that some of the most cruel battles fought in the eleventh century by the republics of Bologna and Modena, originated in a stolen bucket, not worth more than a dollar. The cruel rebellion of our own country originated in the spirit of secession, and cost a thousand million dollars, beside a million of precious lives. This sum would have supported a missionary to every 300 pagans in the world—all swallowed up in blood. Most, if not all of these wars might have been prevented, if reason had its sway. The war between the Gileadites, under Jeph-

thah, and the Ammonites, was unavoidable, for Jephthah had made repeated efforts to come to an amicable understanding, but all in vain.

3. *He is made the recipient of resistless power.*

He has prayed. He has tried hard to effect an amicable settlement of the difficulty, but to no purpose. The Almighty Spirit now descends upon him. He is nerved for the conflict. That Divine Spirit enters his soul by faith, and he is made invulnerable. Thus shall we feel if the Spirit which descended on Jephthah come down on us.

Not only so; under the influence of this power, he realizes a most brilliant victory. "He smote them from Aroer, even till thou come to Minnith, even twenty cities, and unto the plain of the vineyards, with a very great slaughter. Thus the children of Ammon were subdued before the children of Israel." Judges xi. 33.

This was his first great victory, his second being over the Ephraimites; and as we contemplate both, we are constrained to exclaim, "What hath faith wrought!" So by faith in Jephthah's God we shall be made victors over all the combined forces of earth and hell. When Antigonus was preparing for a sea-fight, and was apprised of the number of the enemy, he replied, "'Tis true, they surpass us in numbers, but for how many do you value me?" He proved a host in himself. Our foes may be numerous and mightier than us, but "if God be for us, who can be against us?" Greater indeed is He who is with us, than all they who can be against us.

4. *He sacredly executes his vows.*

This was a noble trait in this man of faith. Having made a certain vow unto the Lord, he faithfully performed it, however painful its execution. This vow has given rise to considerable discussion. Some * maintain that Jephthah actually offered his daughter, and only child, as a burnt-offering unto the Lord; others † that it simply means her banishment to perpetual virginity. "Where doctors differ, who shall decide?" It is not likely, however, that the Lord would suffer him to destroy his daughter in this manner. The case cited of Abraham offering his only son, Isaac, is no parallel case, for that offering, though virtually, was not literally made. That circumstance was simply to test the patriarch's faith, and to let the ages see what it could do. The fact that Heaven restrained the deed is conclusive proof that God does not sanction child-murder to appease or please Him. Nowhere in the inspired record do we learn that God countenances or encourages such thank-offerings, or burnt-offerings. It has been ably shown, that the conjunction "and" at the close of Judges xi. 31, should be replaced by the disjunctive word "or." It is so rendered in the margin, and a reference to the original will justify the correction. Besides, the succeeding verses of that chapter clearly

* Junius, Grotius, Leclerc, Saurin, Waterland, Adam Clarke, Bishop Hall, Selden, Wesley, Gill, Bush, Kiel, Hengstenberg, and others.

† Chrysostom, Tertullian, Jerome, Augustine, Luther, Lightfoot, Calvert, Henry, Warburton, Edwards, Scott, Kitto, Stanley, and others.

demonstrate that "perpetual virginity," or a life of celibacy, is intended. Let every one be fully persuaded in his own mind. "The vow, whatever it may have been, was faithfully kept. How many vows have we made to God, but how few have we kept!"

5. *He triumphantly ends his career.*

Having judged Israel six years, he was buried with honors in one of the cities of Israel. By faith in God he lived, and in faith he died. By faith in God he fought; by the same faith he conquered; by its support he met "the last enemy" without a shudder; and on its eagle pinion he soared to his celestial home, where the boom of cannon and the thunder of artillery are never heard.

Have we the faith of Jephthah? that faith which makes us prayerful, honorable, brave, faithful, triumphant. We cannot be crowned as heroes, unless we have this personal faith. In Jephthah's army, every man had his own weapon; in Gideon's camp, every soldier had his own pitcher; and among Solomon's men of valor, every man wore his own sword; and these were they who achieved the victory. If we would gain the victor's crown, we must "fight the good fight of faith."

"O that each, in the day
Of His coming, may say,
'I have fought my way through;
I have finished the work thou didst give me to do;
O that each from his Lord
May receive the glad word,
'Well and faithfully done;
Enter into my joy, and sit down on my throne.'"

CHAPTER XXI.

HEB. XI. 32.

32 And what shall I more say : for the time would fail me to tell of Gedeon, and of Barak, and of Samson, and of Jephthae ; of David also, and Samuel, and of the prophets.

“The glories of our birth and state
Are shadows, not substantial things ;
There is no armor against fate :
Death lays his icy hands on kings ;
Sceptre and crown
Must tumble down,
And in the dust be equal made
With the poor, crooked scythe and spade.

“Some men with swords may reap the field,
And plant fresh laurels where they kill ;
But their strong nerves at last must yield ;
They tame but one another still :
Early or late
They stoop to fate,
And must give up their murmuring breath,
When they, pale captives, creep to death.

“The garlands wither on your brow,
Then boast no more your mighty deeds ;
Upon death's purple altar now,
See where the victor victim bleeds !
All heads must come
To the cold tomb ;
Only the actions of the just
Smell sweet and blossom in the dust.”—*Shirley*.

VOLUMES might be written on the distinguishing traits in David's character, and on the marvellous

achievements of his life. Every particle of his history is fraught with the highest interest, and replete with the most profitable instruction. From youth to manhood and old age, what an extensive scene opens before us! Over that scene we cannot travel by means of a solitary discourse. Who can peruse carefully and thoughtfully the seventeenth chapter of the first book of Samuel, without feeling the heart glow with excitement and admiration at its dramatic representation? That chapter is sufficient of itself to corroborate the fact of David's faith. Through it he literally escaped the edge of Goliath's sword, and "out of weakness was made strong."

THE FAITH OF DAVID.

I. *As seen in his wonderful achievements.*

The most remarkable achievement recorded is that over Goliath, the champion of the Philistines. The youngest of the family, and only a "raw youth," he seemed the most unlikely of Jesse's sons to achieve such triumph. A lad combating with a giant! A mere stripling, daring to face and fight so prodigious a foe. The like was never heard, or seen, or known.

Eliab, his eldest brother, by his mean insinuations, had said enough to daunt a taller, and stronger, and older lad than David, his fourteen year old brother. He insolently and angrily inquires, "Why camest thou down hither, and with whom hast thou left those few sheep in the wilderness? I know thy pride and the naughtiness of thine heart, for thou art come down that thou mightest see the battle."

The sequel, however, proves the falsity of Eliab's upbraiding words, for he came down not to see the battle, but to win it. There he is, the rustic, rosy-looking shepherd lad. He has never been drilled like his brothers in military science. He has never been taught how to kill men successfully, by killing them wholesale. Notwithstanding all this, he has something which is more than a substitute for lack of military preparation. He has faith. Trained in Nature's school, he has received his tuition from God. He has been trained by Heaven for this occasion. See! he arrives on the battlefield in the valley of Elah. What a crisis! The first thing that greets, or rather grates on his ears, is the defiant challenge of the giant from Gath. His nature is aroused. His spirit is stirred as he contemplates his people's oppression. Quick as the lightning's flash he asks, "Who the uncircumcised Philistine was that he should defy the armies of the living God?" It seems that the children of Israel, at this time, were in a sorrowful plight. They had been completely demoralized by the Philistine host. They were so sorely beaten, that they were utterly helpless and hopeless as far as they were concerned. It seemed as though they could never rally again. All their weapons were taken away, and there was no prospect of securing fresh supplies. So politic were the oppressors, that every one was either put to death, or removed far away, who dared to follow Vulcan's calling. The ring of the hammer and anvil, the roar of the forge and the squeak of the bellows, were sounds

unheard in Israel. Every Jew who needed implements for agricultural purposes, were obliged to apply to the Philistines for them.

When their tools became blunt by reason of active service, they were only allowed a file for sharpening them, and when such means were unavailing, they were obliged to take them to their despotic masters, to have their smiths set them fit for service. This arrangement was made, that there might be no possible chance of having anything that would resemble a weapon. "Now there was no smith found throughout all the land of Israel: for the Philistines said, Lest the Hebrews make them swords or spears." 1 Samuel xiii. 19-21.

There was an overruling Providence, however, in all this. When they could not obtain weapons of war, they exercised their skill in other ways, which subsequently proved advantageous. Though they had no opportunity of learning the art of wielding the sword, or poisoning the spear, they nevertheless trained themselves in the art of slinging. We learn that the Benjamites had become famous in this art. "Among all this people there were seven hundred chosen men lefthanded; every one could sling stones at an hairbreadth and not miss." Judges xx. 16. This probably accounts for David's extraordinary skill in slinging. He knew no other weapon.

Saul hears of the adventurous youth, and sends for him. The interview is most interesting and thrilling. The shepherd lad cheers the king, from whom he had on a previous occasion charmed away the evil

spirit, and assures him that there was no cause for faintheartedness, and offers to take up the giant's challenge. Because of his extreme youth, and the giant's superior advantages, the king questioned the propriety of accepting his proffered service. The answer we shall furnish in David's own language: "Thy servant kept his father's sheep, and there came a lion, and a bear, and took a lamb out of the flock: And I went out after him, and smote him, and delivered it out of his mouth: and when he arose against me, I caught him by his beard, and smote him, and slew him. Thy servant slew both the lion and the bear: and this uncircumcised Philistine shall be as one of them, seeing he hath defied the armies of the living God. The Lord that delivered me out of the paw of the lion, and out of the paw of the bear, He will deliver me out of the hand of this Philistine." In God's name, and by Saul's consent, David goes forth to meet Goliath. He has no need to trouble the Philistines for his missiles. A brook flows near by, where he may help himself to as many as he desires. He selects five smooth stones, and is ready for work. With his sling and stone the athletic lad faces the monster. Goliath is disgusted. A mere stripling daring to confront him! His disgust soon gives way to passion: "Am I a dog, that thou comest to me with staves? and he cursed David by his gods." "Come to me, and I will give thy flesh unto the fowls of the air, and to the beasts of the field." Miserable lubber! He under-estimates his match. "Thou comest to me," replies the dauntless youth, "with a

sword, and with a spear, and with a shield : but I come to thee in the name of the Lord of hosts, the God of the armies of Israel, whom thou hast defied. This day will the Lord deliver thee into my hand ; and I will smite thee, and take thy head from thee ; and I will give the carcasses of the host of the Philistines this day to the fowls of the air, and to the wild beasts of the earth ; that all the earth may know that there is a God in Israel. And all this assembly shall know that the Lord saveth not with sword and spear : for the battle is the Lord's, and He will give you into our hands." 1 Samuel xvii. 45-47.

David is not in the least terrified, for he is moved by faith, and nerved by Divine power. See the uplifted sling ! A moment, and the well directed stone sinks into the enemy's head. Under the Divine blessing the first aim is a successful one. The monster falls helpless to the earth, and his head is snatched off in the twinkling of an eye. Brave shepherd boy ! thou hast proved thyself a warrior bold, and hast immortalized thyself as the champion of thy people. Yea ! thou hast proved thyself to be "more than conqueror," for thou hast in thy shepherd-bag the materials to slay four more giants if necessary.

II. *As the secret of his extraordinary success.*

We must bear in mind that the secret of David's wonderful achievement was not in his own strength or skill, helpful as they might have been. His skill would have utterly failed, and his courage gone, but

for his faith in the God of Omnipotence. Divorced from faith, and he would have been but a small morsel for the roaring enemy, who sought to devour him. Faith in God conveyed calmness to his soul; that calmness helped to make his arm steady, and his aim sure. By this same unconquerable principle he gained other victories, and subdued kingdoms. Verily, "nothing is impossible to those who believe." A faith like that of David knows how to "keep the powder dry," and place its entire trust in Jehovah. Separate from God, the most dwarfish foe will conquer us, and the most insignificant temptation overcome us. Linked to God by faith, the fiercest temptation assails us in vain, and the tallest giant shall quail before us. Yea, by faith in David's God we may slay foes more terrible than the giant of Gath; foes that will surely crush us, unless we crush them.

The combat of this man of faith with the Philistine giant, reminds us of the skirmish between "Christian and Apollyon." The immortal dreamer represents the latter as a hideous monster, "with scales like a fish, which were his pride; had wings like a dragon, and feet like a bear, and out of whose belly came fire and smoke, and whose mouth was as the mouth of a lion." He looked disdainfully at Christian, as Goliath did at David, and began to tantalize him, and to speak meanly of his Prince. Then Christian replies, "Apollyon, beware what you do, for I am in the King's highway, the way of holiness; therefore, take heed to yourself." Then Apollyon straddled quite over the whole breadth of the way and

said, "I am void of fear in this matter; prepare thyself to die; for I swear by my infernal den that thou shalt go no further; here will I spill thy soul," and with that he threw a flaming dart at his breast, but Christian had a shield in his hand, with which he caught it, and so prevented the danger of that; then did Christian draw, for he saw it was time to be stirring, and Apollyon as fast made at him, throwing darts as quick as hail; by the which, notwithstanding all that Christian could do to avoid it, Apollyon wounded him in his head, his hand and foot. This made Christian give a little back; Apollyon, therefore, followed his work amain, and Christian again took courage, and resisted as manfully as he could. This sore combat lasted for above half a day, even till Christian was almost quite spent; for you must know, that Christian, by reason of his wounds, must needs grow weaker and weaker.

Then Apollyon, espying his opportunity, began to gather up close to Christian, and wrestling with him, gave him a dreadful fall, and with that, Christian's sword flew out of his hand. Then said Apollyon, "I am sure of thee now; and with that he had almost pressed him to death, so that Christian began to despair of life: but, as God would have it, while Apollyon was fetching his last blow, thereby to make a full end of this good man, Christian nimbly reached out his hand for his sword, and caught it, saying, "Rejoice not against me, O mine enemy; when I fall I shall rise" (Micah vii. 8), and with that he gave him a deadly thrust, which made him give back, as

one that had received his mortal wound. Christian perceiving that, made at him again, saying, "Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors, through Him that loved us;" and with that Apollyon spread forth his dragon wings, and sped away, that Christian saw him no more.*

Let us learn from David's faith the wisdom of trusting in God. Let us learn from Goliath's presumption, the folly of trusting in an arm of flesh.

Who can read of the faith of David, and other Old Testament saints, without feeling the indomitableness, the unconquerable, and all-conquering character of these men of God? Who can read of Bunyan and Baxter, Cyprian and Carey, Huss and Howard, Jerome and Judson, Knox and Knibb, Luther and Latimer, Menno and Müller, Ridley and Rogers, Tyndale and Tennent, Wycliffe and Whitefield, without feeling that they were sustained by an unfaltering faith in God?

"Triumphant Faith!"

Who from the dust of earth looks up to Heaven;
Seeing invisibility, suspending
Eternity upon the breath of God.
She can pluck mountains from the rooted throne
And hurl them into ocean; and from pain
And prison and contempt extort the palm
Of everlasting triumph. She doth tread
Upon the neck of pride, like the free wind
On angry ocean. So with step erect
She walks o'er whirlpool waves, and martyr fires,
And depths of darkness and chaotic voids;

* Bunyan's "Holy War."

Dissolving worlds, rent heavens, and dying suns,
Yea, and o'er Paradise of Earth's glory ; all these pave
Her conquering path to heaven—all these she spurns
With feet fire-shod, because her hand is placed
Immortal in God's ; her eye doth rest
Unchanging on His, nor will she stop,
Till having crossed the stormy waves of pain,
And fiery trial, she may lay her head
Upon her Father's breast, and take the crown .
From Love's rejoicing hand."

CHAPTER XXII.

HEB. XI. 32.

32 And what shall I more say ? for the time would fail me to tell of Gedeon, and of Barak, and of Samson, and of Jephthae; of David also, and Samuel, and of the prophets.

“Rest, prophet, rest! thou hast fulfilled thy mission !
Loud was the lamentation; tears unfeigned
At Ramah, o’er his tomb long time deplored
Him, last of those who righteous ruled the land,
Ere man sat throned in Israel. All deplored
The Nazarine, to whose unmingled cup
The grape ne’er lost its flavor. Tears unfeigned
Wept him, a holy vessel, set apart
An offering from his birth.”—*Sotheby*.

SAMUEL is the last patriarch mentioned by name in the eleventh chapter of Hebrews. Though last, he is far from being least. His birth was a most interesting circumstance. His mother named him Samuel, “Because I have asked him of the Lord.”

None can describe the profound gratitude and joy that swelled the hearts of Elkanah and Hannah, when they received this gift from the Lord.

His subsequent conduct gave them still greater cause for thankfulness and praise, for a nobler youth never breathed, and a godlier man was not found in his day. He truly fulfilled that section of the text which relates to those who have “wrought righteousness.” There are several interesting features in

THE FAITH OF SAMUEL.

1. *He was prompt in his obedience.*

When the Lord called, he *immediately*—I put particular emphasis on that word—he *immediately* obeyed the voice, and did whatsoever the Lord commanded him. *Thrice* did the Lord call unto him, “Samuel,” and *thrice* did he respond to the call, though on each occasion he mistook it for Eli’s call. Finding, however, that he was mistaken, and feeling that it must have been the Lord’s voice, Eli kindly instructs him as to the next course he should pursue on the repetition of the call.

The *fourth* time Jehovah appears, and salutes Samuel’s ears in the same strain, “Samuel, Samuel,” and before the echo dies away, he replies, “Speak; for thy servant heareth.”

Mark, he did not wait to be called four times before returning an answer. Nay, he replies each time. Though on three successive occasions he conceived the voice to be Eli’s, yet he did not slight it. He felt it a privilege to respect the patriarch’s voice; much more readily (had it been possible) would he have responded to the Divine call, had he known it as such. How gladly, how heartily did he reply to God’s call, when he realized it was His. How often has God called upon us, and we have returned no answer. We have treated his calls with unmerited contempt. Some He has called times without number, who have yet not listened to Him. O! the mercy and patience of God! He deals with us as we

would not with our fellow men upon whom we may have claim.

2. *He was eminent in prayer.*

It was in reply to his prayer of faith that the children of Israel defeated the Philistine enemy at Mizpeh. They had faith in the prayers of this holy man, so that they besought him "not to cease crying unto the Lord his God, that he would save them out of the hands of the Philistines." Samuel concurred with their desire, and laid the matter before God. The Lord heard him. The prayer of faith was not offered in vain; it pierced the distant clouds, and reached Jehovah's ears, and touched His heart. The blessing sought for was obtained, and they proved the successful victors.

Having thus succeeded, Samuel takes a stone and places it between Mizpeh and Shen, and calls the name of it "Ebenezer," saying, "Hitherto hath the Lord helped us." To Samuel's prayers may be attributed the triumph on this occasion.

We may well apply this to the *spiritual* Israelites who may be indebted to their ministerial Samuels for many of the blessings they have enjoyed. How often have they been prayed for, and their welfare occupied the deepest interest of their leaders.

3. *He was an irreproachable judge.*

We have no account that Samuel himself fought. He served as judge, and filled his office most satisfactorily. So perfect was he in this respect, that "he judged Israel all the days of his life." He verily wrought righteousness.

Samuel was an upright and godly judge. There is danger of divorcing the official, from personal character, and whenever this is done, the individual is seriously injured. There have been good men who have been bad judges, and bad men who have made respectable judges. There have been those who failed to carry out in public business, the sentiments and principles which guided them in private life, and have thus left a blot upon their profession. Like Eli, they were weak and afraid to offend. There have also been those who defended the majesty of law and decreed righteous judgment, who were, nevertheless, reckless in their personal conduct. There is another danger to which a judge is exposed, when he is tempted to indulge personal feelings where impartial judgment should be given. It is recorded of Aristides, one of the brightest names in ancient Greece, and a man to whom his contemporaries awarded the title of "the Just," that when he was a judge between two private persons, "one of them declared that his adversary had greatly injured Aristides." He thus hoped to awaken the personal feelings of the judge against his opponent, and secure a verdict favorable to himself. But the just judge replied, "Relate, rather, what wrong he hath done to thee, for it is thy cause, not mine, that I now sit judge of." Private feelings may, however, sometimes be tried severely. When Brutus had to occupy the seat of justice, and his two sons were placed at the bar charged with treason against the State, it was trying for the patriot to set aside the parent, and for duty to act against

affection. But the majesty of law prevailed over the emotions of kindred, and the spectators are said to have gazed more at the judge than on the culprits on that august occasion, and to have regarded the scene as a most illustrious exhibition of moral heroism. A judge should be upright, and Samuel brought to the judicial seat a character fitted for the high office he had to discharge. He was a man of God. His life was consistent in all its actions. Whether he ministered at the altar, or presided in the assembly of the people, or spoke in the name of the Lord, or directed his own house, he was the same. Religion pervaded his life and occupation. This is beautifully referred to in the words, "There [at Ramah] was his house; and there he judged Israel; and there he built an altar to the Lord." The altar was beside his bench and home. The profession of his faith was beside his robe of office. The believer was in the judge. He connected the official with the personal so intimately, that he could not be a godly man without also being at the same time an upright judge. He sought to maintain a good conscience in court as well as at home. This was the highest honor which his official dignity could obtain, and it was the best guarantee to the people over whom he presided, that his decisions in all their controversies would be accordant with the law of the Lord. This made Samuel the father of his people, and the whole of Israel as his family. Nor has he stood alone in judicial integrity and personal piety. Sir Matthew Hale was a man after Samuel's pattern. Under the power

of godliness, and familiar with the word of God, he sought to evidence the principles of religion in the practice of his profession. When he was an advocate, he would not plead a case if convinced of its injustice, and when he rose to the bench and was Chief Baron of the Exchequer, he was noted for the impartiality of his decisions. A peer of the realm, who had a case in court, once called upon him to give him private information, that he might have fuller understanding of it when it was brought up for judgment. Sir Matthew is reported to have said that "he did not deal fairly to come to his chamber about such affairs, for he never received any information of causes but in open court, where both parties were to be heard alike." The duke complained to the king, but his Majesty observed, that "he believed he would have used him no better if he had gone to solicit him in any of his cases." Sir Matthew feared God and regarded man, but his integrity and righteousness were not to be sacrificed. He loved the Lord's day and gave a most illustrious example of its strict observance. This is his testimony: "Though my hands and my mind have been as full of secular business, both before and after I was judge, as it may be any man's in England, yet I never wanted time in six days to ripen and fit myself for the business and employments I had to do, though I borrowed not one minute from the Lord's day to prepare for it by study or otherwise." Sir William Jones was another illustrious example.

What a blessing to a country is a just judge—

what a curse an unjust one ! Those appointed to the judiciary, should always be men of sterling worth and strict integrity. We thank God we have no such monsters as Jeffreys on our judicial benches, who would maliciously convict, and barbarously punish those who worship the God of their fathers, according to the dictates of their consciences. Would that the *faith* and *piety* of Samuel were realized by all our esteemed judges. Their honesty, integrity, and uprightness, we would not venture to call in question. Some of them, too, have faith in God. Would they may all enjoy the same blessing.

4. *He was an exemplary preacher.*

He shunned not to declare the whole counsel of God. He preached the duty of repentance, and its absolute necessity. This subject is not a new theme. The preaching of repentance began early. It was the subject of Noah's alarm-cry to the gigantic sinners of the antediluvian world. It was the burden of Elijah's prophetic message to the idolatrous Israelites. It was the substance of John the Baptist's cry in the wilderness. The whole of the Apostles enforced it upon an impenitent, godless people. It rang through Germany by Martin Luther's trumpet-tongue, and echoed among the Alpine valleys from Zwinglius' patriotic soul. It thundered throughout Scotland from the lips of the stern and intrepid Knox. It was the subject of Latimer's blunt homethrusts to the practical heart of England; and the same might be affirmed of Tennent and Shepherd in this country, also of Baxter, Alleine and Flavel, and others.

Samuel, too, was not of that class who preached to please men, or to coax worldly applause. He preached to awaken and benefit. Repentance was his awakening theme. He sought fruits meet for repentance.

The people were anxious, for sin oppressed their souls; but Samuel did not rest satisfied with the expressed emotion. He demanded instant proof of professed sincerity: "If ye do return unto the Lord with all your hearts, then put away the strange gods and Ashtaroth from among you, and prepare your hearts unto the Lord and serve Him only." To give up evil ways is one of the earliest signs of a penitent soul. It is indispensable to separate from whatever contaminates the soul. To put away idolatry was, therefore, the first requirement which Samuel made of the awakened people. They had been defiled by their foul idolatries. They had defiled the land with their imported images. But if they would return to God, they must remove these pollutions. "Then the children of Israel did put away Baalim and Ash-taroeth." Their smarting souls were glad to do anything which would expedite relief. Their sense of divine purity and authority led them to put away what they knew to be offensive to the Holy One. This is always so. At the time of the Protestant Reformation, when the people were awakened, they cleared the churches and also their houses of all images used for worship. When Christianity was successfully introduced among the South Sea Islanders, the burning of the idols was the proof of their sincere awakening. When your soul is convicted of

sin, and the light of God's holy law flashes upon your guilty pursuits, the first proof of your real repentance will be the abandonment of these indulgences. This is the trial of conviction. You may profess anxiety to be saved, and mourn over your sins; but so long as you do not give up what comes between your soul and God, you have not sincerely repented. You may mean well; but so long as you do not deny ungodliness and worldly lusts, your soul is endangered. "Bring forth, therefore, fruits meet for repentance." Matt. iii. 8.

5. *He consecrated his youth to God.*

I mention this last, as I want to have a parting word with the young. It is said that "Samuel ministered before the Lord, being a child, girded with a linen ephod." Seeking God early, he found Him, and finding Him, he devoted his first and best days to His service.

"When Samuel was young, he first knew the Lord;
He slept in His smile, and rejoiced in His word.
So most of God's children are early brought nigh;
Oh, seek Him in youth—to a Saviour now fly."

How is it with you, my young friends? Have you, like Samuel, in youth, begun to seek and to serve the Lord? If not, you ought to. It is not too soon. The earlier the better. God wants the flower of your life—the bloom of your youth, and not the fading remnant of it. Do not give your best days to Satan, and dream that the remnant of your life is good enough for God. Don't wait till you are a worthless

and wrinkled old sinner, and think that it is time enough then to go to God in penitence and prayer. Of what service can you be then? Besides, if you wait till then, it is likely enough you will be like the rest of those hardened and stubborn, who live to old age without God, and die at last like heathens, without hope in the world. Come now and seek God as your father. Come now and enter his service. There is no time like youth to serve the Lord.

“Come, while the blossoms of thy years are brightest,
Thou youthful wanderer in a flowery maze;
Come while the restless heart is bounding lightest,
And joy’s pure sunbeams tremble in thy ways;
Come while sweet thoughts, like summer buds unfolding,
Waken rich feelings in the careless breast;
While yet thy hand the ephemeral wreath is holding,
Come and secure interminable rest.

“Soon will the freshness of thy days be over,
And thy free buoyancy of soul be flown;
Pleasure will fold her wing, and friend and lover
Will to the embrace of the worm be gone;
Those who now bless thee will have passed forever,
Their looks of kindness will be lost to thee;
Thou wilt need balm to heal thy spirit’s fever,
As thy sick heart broods over years to be.

“Come while the morning of thy life is glowing,
Ere the dim phantoms thou art chasing, die—
Ere the gay spell which earth is round thee throwing
Fades like the crimson from a sunset sky.
Life is but shadows, save a promise given
Which lights up sorrow with a fadeless ray;
O touch the sceptre! with a hope in Heaven,
Come, turn thy spirit from the world away.

“Then will the crosses of this brief existence
Seem airy nothings to thine ardent soul;
And shining brightly in the forward distance,
Will of thy patient race appear the goal.
Home of the weary! where in peace reposing,
The spirit lingers in unclouded bliss;
Though o'er its dust the curtained grave is closing,
Who would not *early* choose a lot like this?”



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